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On the mischiefs of self-
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REV^d RICH^d BAXTER

ON THE
MISCHIEFS
OF
SELF-IGNORANCE,
AND THE
BENEFITS
OF
SELF-ACQUAINTANCE.

BY
RICHARD BAXTER.

WITH
AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY THE
REV. DAVID YOUNG,
PERTH.

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

It is the sentiment of Pope, in his celebrated ethical poem, that "the proper study of mankind is man." We scarcely alter this sentiment by saying, that the proper study of every individual man is himself; and although no advantage were to be derived from this department of research, we might expect to see him drawn to it by an irrepressible curiosity. Whatever be the origin of our being, or the end for which it was given us, it must be obvious to every one, that the phenomena which it exhibits are pre-eminently interesting. The mechanism of our bodies, so complicated in its parts, and yet so exact in its adaptations, is confessedly a specimen of exquisite skill; our capacities of thought and rational activity, so restless and versatile, and powerfully discursive, exalt us above the loftiest of nature's material productions, and loudly proclaim us the first of its wonders; while the singular conjunction of mind with matter, of which our being consists, invests us with a mysterious grandeur, which is fitted to arrest the dullest intellect, and awaken the most intense inquiry. And when we

add to these things, the consideration, that this is the solitary instance among the creatures of earth, in which the subject and the student are one and the same; that man is the only being, here below, who is capable of examining and knowing himself; that the singular assemblage of constituent properties, to which we have adverted, so opposite in its elements, but so admirably assorted and harmonized, is not separate from him, but his very self, the seat of his living consciousness, and strictly identical with all that he is, it seems necessary to infer, that this branch of knowledge must take precedence of every other, or, at the very least, that other knowledge will be valued only in as far as it tends to reveal its secrets, or unfold its physical and social relations.

Thus much might be expected from mere curiosity; but if we pass from these things to yet graver matters, if we consider that this wonderful existence, which we so fondly call ourselves, is, in all its parts, the workmanship of God; that its elevation, on the scale of being, has raised it up to responsibilities, which renders it strictly accountable to him for all its voluntary operations; that it is destined to continue for ever amidst felicities the most refined, or sufferings the most painful, according to the moral condition in which it enters the future state—that the present life is the crisis of its destiny, where the felicities of the future are to be lost or won, and that to meet this crisis, in such a way as to secure these felicities, the knowledge of ourselves and our moral relations, is absolutely indispensable—if we consider these things, and take so much as a general survey of their character and importance, they raise

the expectation inconceivably higher, and seem as if they would constrain us to conclude, if man be reasonable at all, that, whatever other topics of research may occasionally attract him, yet the history of his own being, and circumstances, and prospects, is sure, in every instance, to be thoroughly explored.

Such is the verdict of theory, as founded in reason and enlightened self-love; but fact, alas! deplorably belies it. The phenomena of our nature are sedulously studied, as topics of rational amusement, or as ministering to the advancement of *mere science*, whether physical or ethical, or from the sordid desire of turning the many, to the supposed advantage of the few, whose deeper secular sagacity, or daring in sensual wickedness, may have given them the ascendancy. In this latter respect, especially, our nature is eagerly studied, and extensively known. Its powers and competencies, in body or in mind, are industriously scanned, and correctly estimated; its likings and aversions are carefully ascertained, and even its foibles, and weak points, are marked and appreciated, all for the purpose of making it subservient to an ever-working and multiform selfishness. Such is the kind of acquaintance with man, which is actively cultivated, and highly extolled, by the votaries of worldly wisdom: and were this the study of which we speak, our task would be easily accomplished, for all that is talent or enterprise in the busy world around us, is already in vigorous pursuit of it. So far from leading man, however, to a just and rational acquaintance with himself, it does the very reverse, it averts his attention from the proper subject; for the habit of looking outward makes him

forget to look inward: it leaves him little leisure, and less inclination, for considering the origin and end of his being; it obliterates the contrast between what he ought to be, and what he is, and thereby vitiates his moral feeling; it inures him to that which is shadowy and perishing, till the spiritual and vital are utterly forgotten.

But the knowledge of which we speak, has the man's *self* for its object—his whole constitution, corporeal and mental; the moral complexion, and continued workings of the thinking principle within him; the particular kinds of good or evil to which he feels himself prompted, by inward moral bias, or influence from without: the responsibilities by which he is bound, as a reasonable being, under law to the Author of all being; the favourable circumstances in which he is placed, by the tender mercy of the God that made him, and the awfully solemn inquiry whether he is, or is not, so improving these circumstances, as to warrant the hope of a happy immortality. These are a few of the leading topics, which must of necessity be examined, before a man can have any pretensions to the first and highest of all acquirements—the knowledge of himself; for our standing here is not isolated, but morally and spiritually related, and it is impossible to explore the mystery of our being, or to meet its duties and advantages, except in as far as its moral relations are ascertained and appreciated. Situated as we are, it is indispensable, that, in order to know ourselves, we should know the God that made us; and the moral constitution which he has given us; and the law under which he has placed us; and the spiritual

calamity which afflicts us; and the remedy which God has provided for us; and the duties which we owe to that living community, in the midst of which he has placed us. All these things enter vitally into the exercise of self-inquiry; and ignorance of any one of these, or error about it, is sure to involve a corresponding error in the use of Christian privilege, or the practice of Christian duty.

It is this important consideration that we wish the reader to carry along with him to the perusal of the volume before us. We wish him, in short, to see it as a truth, and to adopt it as a settled maxim, that, to be he knows not what, as a moral and religious being, or to think himself to be what he is not, on the one extreme or on the other, is to carry about with him a state of mind, which is sure to mislead his religious practice. If his eye be misguided, when turned inward on his moral condition as a sinner, it cannot but commit a corresponding error, when turned outward on that dispensation of righteousness and love, which God has revealed for his life and salvation; for the last is adapted to the first, with a most amazing exactness, as the antidote to the poison, or the remedy to the disease; and if a man's views of his moral condition be deficient, or exaggerated, or confused and inconsistent, the moral harmony is destroyed, and he is constrained to regard the Christian remedy as superfluous or inadequate, or, in one respect or other, alien or inappropriate. But if this be the effect of self-ignorance on the formation of religious opinions, it must produce the same effects on individual practice, for man feels as he thinks, and acts as he feels, when not restrained by

circumstances, and no man will embrace the gospel, which is the vital act of all religion, while he feels a moral incongruity between his wants and its provisions. He may respect the gospel, his conscience may constrain him to admit its general excellence; he may wish it would appear to him as he believes it does to others; but he has not self-knowledge enough, to enable him to embrace it. We plead not for perfection in the knowledge of ourselves, in order to a truly religious practice; for a man may be ignorant of things about himself, which are more or less remote from the essentials of religion, while this ignorance may be quite compatible with his interest in the Christian deliverance. Even in these cases, however, the man is injured, although the injury amounts not to absolute ruin; but if the leprosy of his ignorance—for it is, in fact, a disease—be so deep and pervasive, as to reach the vital parts of that relation, in which he stands to the universal moral Lawgiver, it is dangerous in the extreme; throwing a moral impossibility between him and the salvation of his soul, and convincing all who can estimate his condition, that he must be made to know himself, or perish for ever.

Reasonings of this kind invest the subject with an overwhelming importance, and, alarmed at the deadly injury which inattention to it is inflicting on persons of all classes around us, we request the reader gravely to ponder it in the three following points of view: namely, as it bears on his conversion from sin to godliness; on the gradual renovation of his nature; and the inward satisfaction with which he engages in religious duties.

I. Self-knowledge is indispensable to a genuine conversion from sin to godliness. Of course, we speak of such as have the use, as well as the faculty, of understanding; and who are therefore required to deport themselves in religion, after the manner of reasonable beings; for all such are forbidden to expect that they shall pass unconsciously, or without the gravest exercise of reason, from guilt to acquittance, or from darkness to light, or from the power of Satan unto God. To harbour such a hope, is impiously to suppose, that reason has been given to us in vain; for if this high attribute be good for any thing, its primary use must certainly be, to carry on religious intercourse with the great Being from whom it came. We could live by instinct as a beast lives, but it is reason alone which enables us to adore.

Now, it is a plain doctrine of Scripture, that, since it is intelligent beings who require to be saved, no man can be converted from sin to godliness, without a positive *mental* apprehension of that remedy for sin which God has provided and set forth in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. To be ignorant of this remedy, or essentially to mistake its true character, is to remain in a state of total unregeneracy; “for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved,” except the name of Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, and raised from the dead, to give repentance and remission of sins. There is no salvation in any other, and it is a *belief* in him, not simply as one who still exists, and bears the name of Saviour, but as one “whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteous-

ness for the remission of sins," which is the leading characteristic of a converted man. "He that believeth in him," as made known by that which he has achieved on the cross, "shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be condemned." But it is morally impossible for any man to avail himself of this announcement, simple and gracious although it be, without a previous or concurrent belief in the realities of his own condition, as a creature who is guilty and perishing. Jesus Christ is truly God; he assumed our nature into union with his own divine person; and "gave himself for us," in the strictly vicarious sense of the expression, "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." The value of his sacrifice, by this inspired account of it, is unspeakably great; for the people who constitute the Church of God, were purchased with his own blood: and we know that such a ransom-price was indispensable, just because it was determined on by Him who alone could count the cost, or fix the terms of human redemption.

These are the views of the subject which the Scriptures of truth invariably furnish; and it is not to be denied, that the adoption of them is at once the essence of Christian belief, and the very turning point of genuine conversion; but how is it possible for a man to adopt them, unless his estimate of sin in general, and particularly of *his own sin*, be such as to correspond with them? He cannot concur in the device of merey farther than he sees it called

for. He cannot admire the power, and wisdom, and righteousness, and love, which are so finely blended in the work of redemption, unless his consciousness of human wretchedness convince him of its adaptations. He cannot approve of expiation at all, whether made by the sinner himself, or by his accepted Substitute, unless his views of the nature of sin, as committed against a God of eternal righteousness, shall convince him it was indispensable. Much less can he appreciate the stupendous fact, that sin was expiated by God, in our nature, without seeing his own case to be so awfully desperate, that no less a sacrifice was equal to his rescue. Still all this is necessary in order to conversion; for it belongs to the very essence of the Christian remedy: and to believe in Christ for salvation, is just to know that fact, viewing it precisely as it is. But these views of sin are just the beginnings of a genuine self-knowledge—the first openings of the mind on the sad realities of its moral condition. We call them the convictions which precede or accompany a turning to God, and so they are; for they are as really necessary to that important change, as the pain of a frost-bitten hand or foot to the recovery of vital circulation. But their very name, *convictions*, is expository of the point; for it tells us most explicitly that they consist in saddening sights, and painful feelings, of which the man himself—nay, the very conscience of the man—is peculiarly the theatre.

Thus we say, that self-knowledge is indispensable to a genuine conversion from sin to godliness. There are many mysteries about a man which invite,

and may receive, a portion of his regard, but the grand and dreadful mystery which claims his primary and paramount attention, as a prisoner of hope addressed by the gospel, is the mystery of iniquity in his heart. He must see sin as it exists within him, and, irrespective of its outbreakings, to be a deadly moral calamity, disturbing the harmony of his moral constitution; perverting the obvious dictates of nature, and working its way, by certain advances, to the settled predominance of misery unmingled. From his own experience of its evil nature, he must be brought to abhor it in all its forms, whether milder or more virulent, as the one thing in the moral universe, which effectually poisons the human soul; as so directly opposed to the great Supreme, in his very being and administration, that he cannot forgive it, and ought not to do so, without a perfect satisfaction for the offence it has given, and security against its recurrence; and as so ineffably deep in its demerit, that no satisfaction could ever have been found, had not the Son of God, in our nature, "who knew no sin, been made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Such are the views of sin in their substance, although not in all their latitude of import, which must be realized within a man, in order to bring him to the point of conversion; for to turn from sin is to escape for his life: but so firm is its hold of the human heart, and so bewitching the love of its gratifications, that he never can be brought to forsake it, till he see it as his mortal foe, exhausting his comforts, and filling up his cup of misery, by its own intrinsic contrariety to the very being of the God that made

him. We know that isolated self-inquiry will never furnish him with such convictions. In order to arrive at them, he must look out of himself, and form his estimate of moral evil, as it stands displayed in the word of God; but the end for which God has given this display, and the grand reason for studying it which any individual should propose to himself, is just to supply him with correct information about the nature and tendency of moral evil, as it exists and operates in his own heart. In this view of the Bible, it is Heaven's appointed instrument, for curing the sinner of his self-ignorance, and setting before him an adequate view, not simply of sin in general, but of his own specific moral condition, as it is estimated by the God that made him: and it is only when he is led to make this use of the Bible; to carry home its information to his own particular case; to survey himself in the light of its stern disclosures; to turn away, in short, from that which is outward and general, and give himself to that which is inward and special, that he is brought to feel those moral alarms which are the first symptoms of a return to God.

This is the kind of self-knowledge which is indispensable to radical reformation; and it is the want of this knowledge, or *ignorance of self, at this very point*, which causes so many to come short of true and saving conversion. There are some who plead the very greatness of God, or the absolute independence of his being, as a protection to them in their trespasses, arguing as if it were beneath him, as the Governor of a universe, to take any serious interest in the actions of a creature so insignificant

as the wayward child of Adam: and there are others, who seem to judge of their God very much as they judge of their king; thinking it quite enough to conform in externals to the letter of his law, and denying his right to be offended, so long as his authority is thus far respected. These persons cannot be converted, not however because they are sinners, for it is sin which makes a man a subject for conversion, but because, while conversion is effected by the exercise of moral intelligence, and moral feeling, they are so ignorant of themselves, that they cannot appreciate the character of God, and know not what is meant by being a sinner, on the one hand, or a saint on the other; and therefore, are shut out by the grossness of their moral stupidity, from using any of the means which God has graciously ordained, for removing men from the one state of being, and placing them in the other. They may know these means—a Christian education may have fixed them in their memories—but they cannot make the appointed use of them, because they believe them to be nearly superfluous. But the worst of it is, that, while the one of the classes referred to, suppose themselves sheltered in their own insignificance, by ejecting God from the government of his creatures, the other are not only retained in their sins, but fortified in them, by overlooking his eternal Godhead. They admit the necessity of a conversion, at least in the case of the openly immoral, but they measure it exactly by their views of sin, confining it entirely to the outward conduct; and when such a conversion as they approve, has

been accomplished on themselves or others, they hold the point as finally settled, and consider the doctrine of a sinner's repentance as no longer suitable for them. Their ignorance of themselves, as the subjects of sin, involves a corresponding error about the nature of conversion; and this error, perverting their judgment, and quieting every alarm, deludes them with the shadow, instead of the substance, and trains them to live in practical Atheism.

II. Self-knowledge is indispensable to that progressive renovation of nature, which follows a genuine conversion to godliness. Conversion produces a radical change in the moral condition of the sinner's mind, but it does not free him all at once from the practical influence of sin; and, after he has attained it, a process of sanctification is still necessary to fit him for the enjoyments of the heavenly state—for heaven is the scene of perfected happiness; but there can be no perfect happiness, except where holiness is previously made perfect, any more than perfect health, when disease is still disturbing the functions of bodily life. But let it ever be kept in mind, that, although this process of sanctification, as well as conversion itself, be entirely the work of God's free grace, in respect of all efficient agency, it is not, by any means, a work in which the man himself is altogether passive. Its very nature is an interdict on every such opinion. It consists, not in the implanting of any new principles, but in clearing, and settling, and nursing to maturity, the principles of grace which were previously planted; in progressively eradicating the principles of evil; in destroying old habits, and forming new ones; in efforts

to rise above the influence of sin, as it vitiates the heart, or pollutes the lips, or misleads the man in his daily deportment. But, if this be its nature, it is plainly impossible to carry it forward in the heart of any man, who has the use of his understanding, except in as far as it gains the concurrent exercise of his own mental faculties. It is the work of the man himself, as the intelligent, responsible, moral agent, through whose instrumentality the grace of God puts forth its gradually renewing efficacy; and, as a proof that it is so, the language of Scripture, enjoining it, is uniformly addressed, in the form of precept, to the consciences of those who are supposed to be converted. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” “Follow holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.”

But, if the agency of the man himself be thus indispensable to sanctification, it is easy to see, that a clear and accurate knowledge of himself is no less indispensable to the success of that agency. The case, indeed, is such that he *can* apply himself to the work *only* in so far as his self-knowledge enables him to do so; and in whatsoever department the facts of his moral condition are hid from him, or mistaken by him, there he is sure, not only to commit error, or to come short in the exercises which minister to sanctification, but this shortcoming is just as sure to retard the growth of his regenerated nature in every one of its parts. The case of an individual may illustrate this: “I sincerely desire to be sanctified,” it has often be said, “but, such is my situation, that

I can neither make progress in holiness, nor make up my mind to relinquish the pursuit of it. I know, by education, and, perhaps, by belief, that the doctrines, promises, precepts, and institutions of the gospel, are Heaven's accredited means of holiness, and that these means are made efficient, by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost; but, although somewhat attentive to the use of them, I have scarcely any experience of their efficiency in my particular case. An arrest, if not a retrograde, is imposed upon all my efforts to work out my sanctification; and, after a lapse of years of very considerable assiduity, I find I have gained nothing, but a vast accumulation of disappointment and sorrow." We are aware that such a statement as this may sometimes be founded in mistake; for important advances in holiness are frequently made, while circumstances prevent them from being discernible. But we are also aware, that the case of many a reputable Christian is substantially such as this statement represents it; and we would say to such a Christian, Although, perhaps, you have no thought of it, yet, in all likelihood, the cause of the evil of which you complain, is a culpable ignorance of yourself, in one or more important particulars. You are sound enough in all essential points of evangelical belief; you cling, with something like desperation, to the grand regenerating principle, that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanses from all sin: and without reserve, it may be, you lay open your heart, so far as you know it, to the cleansing efficacy of that blood. But, what if there be something in your heart, which you have never thus laid open, just because you have never detected

it, or, if you have detected—have seen it only in disguise, but have never dreamed of half the extent to which it sinfully prevails within you? What if there does lurk within you a particular *moral bias* undiscovered, and therefore unresisted, which, in less, or more, is your characteristic, and so inclines you indirectly to some particular sin, or class of sins, as to make them easily besetting, or peculiarly apt to entice you into trains of thought, or scenes of intercourse, where the temptation to commit them operates with peculiar force? Suppose, for instance, that this *bias* is covetousness—and it may be any one of twenty things as well as this—that it never rises to such a height, as to drive you to deeds of flagrant dishonesty, but hides itself under the mask of a laudable frugality, and finds scope for its operations, within the limits which the easy Christianity of this world has prescribed to respectability—suppose this to be your case, and at once you have found out, if not the real cause, at least a very likely one, for all your want of success in the prosecution of holiness. This one passion, which, although restrained, is not subdued, exerts all the influence of a ruling passion within you, debasing your whole habit of mind, by its gross and groveling affinities, subduing your other evil propensities, which interfere with its gratification: in this way, leading you to ascribe to religion, that in which religion has no part, and insidiously laying your every faculty under contribution to its interests. Nor need you wonder that so base a passion should work so extensively without your knowledge, for you are its satisfied victim, and of all men on earth

the least likely to find it out. The picture may be yours, as certainly as your countenance is the likeness of man; and yet, at this moment, while you read these lines, you may be found indignantly to disown it. It is your fondling among the vices entwined around your heart, and scarcely separable from your consciousness of existence. It has scarcely ever appeared to you, since first it gained the ascendancy, except in the form of a virtue, and often have you thought yourself a pattern of economy, when doing sacrifice to its net, and burning incense to its drag.

But, think of the influence of this one sin, in retarding your sanctification. It misleads your view of your other sins, especially those which are opposed to it, by inducing you to load them with aggravations they do not possess, or which you, at least, would not have ascribed to them apart from its dictation, and training you to a hatred of expensive vices, not purely because they are *vices*, but because they interfere with its sordid cravings. It restrains the exercise of your Christian benevolence, by teaching you to undervalue the most amiable social virtues. Judas preached economy, and frowned on a fine expression of love; not because he loved economy, but because he was a thief and had the bag: and the heart of many a Christian is chargeable with the same offence, although his hands were never stained with a deed of dishonesty. It vitiates your estimate of holiness. Viewing holiness in mere idea, or as it exists in heaven, or as it imbues the Bible, your conception of it may be just; but, viewing it as a practical thing, to be cherished in *your own* heart,

and exemplified in *your own* life, it is lowered and made gross, by your covetous dispositions. It woefully misguides your prayers and exertions, by engaging your attention with minor impurities, while the spring of its own pestiferous influence, the teeming source of your foulest pollution, continues unexplored. These are some of its direct bearings against the process of purification, and to all this extent it is sure to frustrate the transformation of your mind and character. But all this would be of little account, were you aware of its existence, and prepared to bring it fairly into contact with the means of its mortification; for the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanses from all sin: and when you see the evil of this one, and are brought to afflict yourself because of it, with weeping and supplication, at the foot of the cross, your deliverance is at hand. But it is your ignorance of its magnitude, or your deeply infatuated tolerance of its subtle operations, which renders it so very formidable; for, with Christianity at all in your bosom, you cannot see it as it really is, or be truly conscious of its disastrous tendency, without feeling all the energies of your renewed nature, your faith and prayer, and religious assiduity, excited to counteract it, as the one thing which presses your spirit down to the dust, and baffles all your anxious efforts to eradicate evil propensity. Think not that a man can grow holy, while any positively sinful affection is concealed in his bosom, and maintains a hidden ascendancy over him; for, although sinful affections may disagree when out in quest of their separate indulgences, they are congenial in nature, and where any one of them bears rule, the rest are sure to re-

ceive protection. The spirit which animates the whole is one and the same, and one of them cannot live while all the rest are dead; nor can the rest be made to decay at the root, (whatever appearances may show to the contrary,) while so much as one of them maintains itself in vigour.

This, however, is but one of the instances in which ignorance of the state of the heart, retards the progress of sanctification, and is sadly sufficient to account for an evil, of which so many so loudly complain. There are a multitude of others, could we stay to detail them, which would easily bear a similar comment, and clearly indicate similar results. Besides that particular *moral bias*, only one modification of which we have set before you, we might specify many other things; such as your peculiar dispositions, as these are connected, not so much with the prevalence of any besetting, sinful propensity, but with your youthful training, or bodily temperament, or the scenes in life through which you have passed, and are thereby favourable or adverse to the growth of your religious character—or your constitutional *cast* of mind, as tending to feeling rather than speculation, or to speculation rather than feeling; or as dull and obtuse, incapable of progress, except at the expense of unwearied application, and under the spur of constant excitement; or quick and impatient, prone to be superficial, grasping at once so much as it cares for, and hasting away to something new, thus requiring the ceaseless exercise of restraint and circumspection, in order to render its activities profitable—or the particular *habitudes*, moral or educational, or merely accidental, in which, to speak so,

you have insensibly incased your mind, under the unobserved influence of the impressions and activities of the years that are past, and the tendency of which is to mislead or embarrass your religious exercises, or to give to these exercises a congenial support—or these nameless things, which are called the weak points of your character; their nature, their number, the occurrences, within or around you, from which they take occasion, the frequency with which they betray you, the best means of surmounting them, and the extent of injury which they entail on that grand interest, with which, as a religious man, you feel yourself entrusted.

Such are a few tangible points, which a moderate share of reflection may distinctly recognize; but they are points of great importance for clearing your knowledge of your true character, as a professing Christian, in the sight of God; and we set them before you together, that you may ponder them at leisure, and ascertain what it really is to arrive at even a limited acquaintance with that most interesting existence, which you cherish so very tenderly, and often so very complacently designate yourself. And these, be it remembered, are not the metaphysics, but the morals of self-knowledge; not the remote abstractions of the theme, which all, except the learned, may warrantably overlook; but its plain, proximate, practical points, in ignorance of which it is impossible for you to improve your present privilege, or arrive at the adequate use of yourselves in the exercises of religion. Nor are they few, but alarmingly numerous, in the case of almost every individual. The specimens we have mentioned are

but general heads, to which large additions might be easily made; and under each of these heads there are included a great variety of separate items, any one of which may be quite sufficient (and a number may co-operate at once) to intercept that spiritual nourishment, and put an arrest on that growth in grace, by which the man of God is made perfect, being thoroughly furnished unto every good work. But if every one of these be a hidden thing, as subtle in its working, and as likely to elude detection, as the covetous bias already described; if there be something in its very nature which creates the illusion, in which it so safely conceals itself; if its lurking-place within be so deep and intricate, that multitudes of men of the keenest intelligence, and the most diversified information, have failed to find it out, how tremendous an interest does this create around the subject of self-knowledge!—with what distrust of his best appearances should the Christian search for this knowledge!—what sacrifices should he make in order to attain it!—how wistfully should he look for the aid of Omniscience!—and with what despair of his own efforts should he utter the prayer, “Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart!”

III. Self-knowledge is indispensable to the inward satisfaction with which you engage, or ought to engage, in religious duties. That religious observances are intended to be pleasurable, even in this world, is obvious from the fact, that they are the medium of intercourse with God in Christ, who is the fountain of all good. We grant indeed, that

the *immediate* end for which they are prescribed to Christians on earth, is not the production of happiness, but the production of holiness, or the preparation of the child of grace, in connection with a process of painful discipline, for his future manhood of glory, in the immediate presenee of God and the Lamb. Still they have the nature of privilege, as well as of requirement; and are intended to yield a measure of enjoyment, in the meantime, to alleviate the ills of the present life, to soothe the sorrows of contrition, to recruit the strength of the spiritual pilgrim, and to quicken his desire for his heavenly home, by continued foretastes of its exquisite felicities. This has been matter of promise, as well as of experience, ever since the commencement of the dispensation of merey. But it is only in connection with religious duty that such enjoyment can be warrantably expected; for among those who are already in a state of favour, it is not in a detached or separate form, but in connection with dutiful religious activity, that a solid consciousness of the divine favour can either be acquired or preserved. “The way of the Lord is strength to the upright,” in as much as it ministers enjoyment. But while it is thus the nature of religious duties to minister religious enjoyment, we may say farther, that they must do so in order to their own specific maintenance; for man is not capable of persisting in that which he feels to be utterly insipid: and were the experience universal, that waiting on God, in the institutions of his grace, is a matter of form without life, or of service without enjoyment, the whole system of religious duty would be speedily disowned. The want of

this would infallibly indicate want of authority in the system itself: for man is easily able to infer, that a system which rewards not in the act of obedience, is not very likely to punish the disobedient; and where love and fear, or delight and apprehension, are both at an end, it is not possible, in the nature of things, that the observance of religious institutions can long survive them.

Still, there are instances, and these very numerous, in which the observance of these institutions, even when very exemplary, yields no enjoyment, or at least, so very little, that, in the estimate of individuals, it amounts to none. So distressing withal, are the cases of these individuals, that they know not whether to persevere in religion, or to give it up as a hopeless pursuit; and are only restrained from this last alternative, by an undefined horror at the result to which it leads. Now, it is manifest, that in such a case as this, there must be something seriously wrong; and from what has already been said, we may conclude, with the utmost certainty, that the root of the evil is to be found, not in the institutions of religion, nor in the mere sovereignty of the God who has ordained them, but in the individuals themselves. To the question, what is the cause of this want of enjoyment? it is easy to answer, in a general way, that it is sin deadening the affections, and defeating the influence of religious truth; and to the Christian professor who utters the complaint, we would say, in the bowels of brotherly affection, it is just as sure as you exist, that in one respect or other, your *heart* is not right with God, nor sound in his statutes. This you may fix down,

as a first principle in the matter. We say of the man who puts honey into his mouth, but has no consciousness of its sweetness, that his palate is vitiated; but, with equal certainty, may we say of the man who engages in religious exercises, without a consciousness of their spiritual sweetness, that his moral taste is vitiated: and as, in the former case, the diseased taste is usually an index of disease in the animal system, so it is, in the latter case, with still greater certainty, an index of disease in the moral system. For although a man has been found in bodily health, who could not discern the sweetness of honey, yet a man in spiritual health was never found, who could not appreciate the pleasures of religion. The very same sins or shortcomings, which interfere with your progress in holiness, are sure to interfere with your religious enjoyment; by inflicting the one injury on your well-being, they necessarily inflict the other, and much that was stated under the former head, is equally applicable to this.

But it is necessary here to come a little nearer to the point. You complain of the want of religious enjoyment; and we tell you that the cause of it is, sin in your heart, and, of course, in your life. But you reply, that although this may be true in general, yet you know not any particular sin, or class of sins, to which the evil can be fairly traced. Well, here is the very point where your self-knowledge fails you, and where a renewed prosecution of it must commence, in order to your deliverance; for you must come to particulars, and pass from one particular to another, in eager self-research, till you arrive at the identical sin or sins which, more than

any others, "have separated between you and your God, and caused him to hide his face from you." A little attention will show you, that, although your religious concern be perfectly sincere, and your desires considerably earnest, yet you cannot desire, with *all* your heart, that God would effectually wean your soul from every secondary source of enjoyment, and fill it exclusively with delight in himself. You may attempt this, or inadvertently suppose you can do it; but if you set yourself to it with grave consideration, you will detect within you, a latent misgiving, a deep and subtle mental reservation, which very sensibly chills the desire, and interferes with its entireness, while you are in the act of breathing it out. Now, it is this very thing, however minute you take it to be, which is the *bane* of your enjoyment; and until it be discovered, confessed, and forsaken, in its true and proper consistence within you, and in its certain tendency to practical iniquity, you cannot expect your case to be remedied; for be assured, it is only when desire is free and enlarged, the fair expression of *a whole heart*, that it proves itself the harbinger of spiritual delight.

This lurking element of evil, which so sensibly represses your spiritual desires, may be of various kinds. It may be the principle of frivolity, or spiritual indolence, or impure affection, or inordinate propensity to the gains, or honours, or dissipating pleasures of this fleeting world, or any one of the nameless forms which inward depravity so often assumes. It may be no more than a single root of bitterness, or it may consist of several acting in conjunction. But, whatever it be, it is latent, deeply imbedded in

the affections of your heart, exerting its pestiferous influence almost entirely unperceived; and unless you are brought to see it in its true and proper enormity, your heart cannot go out to the fountain of all goodness, and the springs of spiritual solacement cannot be opened within you.

Addressing you as a Christian, we know of no stronger motive for urging you to know yourself in this department, than an appeal to your present unhappy condition. You are in a state of painful uncertainty about your real standing in the sight of God. You enter his sacred presence, and attempt to engage in the acts of his worship, in doubt about the character in which you approach him; you intermeddle with holy things, in a state of dark uncertainty about the relation in which you stand to these holy things; weeks, or months, or years elapse, while the cloud of this uncertainty still continues to envelop your mind, and fill you with distressing anticipations. This is your condition, and it must continue to be so, without the slightest hope of change, so long as you shun the point of inquiry which has been set before you; for a man must know what he is in any circumstances, in order to acquaint himself with what he has to do in these circumstances; and it is only in doing that which becomes him, even under a dispensation of the sovereign grace of God, that his heart can arrive at satisfaction. This is a maxim of practical piety, as well as of common life. To adhere to it, is to follow the dictates of wisdom, and arrive at wisdom's reward; but, to depart from it, is to unsettle your exercise, and render it unavailing. You bewail the want of

religious enjoyment, and in this you are deeply to be sympathized with, for who, that has ever tasted this enjoyment, can cease to lament the loss of it; but, if you neglect all the while to appreciate the gift of God that is in you, or to search out, and ascertain, the opposite agencies which counteract it, you inflict the injury with your own hand, and nurse the very evil of which you complain. By this one omission, which the cause of your uneasiness disposes you to palliate, you deny to God the highest honour which any creature can pay to him; (for it is not the spirit of bondage, but of liberty and delight, which illustrates the true glories of the Christian dispensation :) and do you think it meet, that he should deny himself also, and reward you for doing him dishonour, by lifting up upon you the light of his countenance? Assuredly it is not meet, and common reason might convince you, without the aid of higher arguments, that thus to smile on your perversity, would neither be fit nor desirable. Let experience tell you how the matter stands, and if it shall testify to your face that you fail to peruse the Scriptures, or to utter a prayer, or to enjoy the rest of the Sabbath, or to prosecute the general duties of religion with the special relish of the spiritual man, just because you halt between two opinions, and dare not pronounce yourself a spiritual man, then is it clear as the light of noon, that this is the grand point of inquiry which demands your immediate and earnest attention.

To the question, how shall I attend to it, so as to arrive at a satisfactory result? it may be briefly replied, that the Bible says of men, “by their fruits ye shall know them,” that is, by their appearances of

conformity or disconformity to the requirements of Christian law. But these appearances are not the test, by which you can arrive at a knowledge of your true character, as converted or unconverted in the sight of God. Appearances of ungodliness may be so uniform, as to be quite decisive against a man's conversion; but appearances of its opposite, however regular or well-sustained, cannot be relied on, as a sure sign that he has passed from death unto life. They may satisfy a Christian brother, who sees not beyond the exterior of character, but they ought not to satisfy you, who are furnished with the means, and solemnly charged with the duty, of searching into your heart. But this is not all: the necessity for looking into the heart, is awfully enforced by the consideration, that, in a state of society like ours, there are so many inducements to Christian decency, which have no vital connection with Christianity itself. Open ungodliness is generally checked by the force of a virtuous education, or the prevailing spirit of society, or the influence of settled habit, or the control of a legal conscience, or a constitutional superstition, or a desire for religious respectability, or the hope of success in secular pursuits, among those by whom piety is esteemed. These things, and others like them, are often powerful enough, especially when they operate in combination, to form a character, which man must allow to pass for Christian; although, in the judgment of Him who seeth the heart, it is rejected as spurious, because not a particle of genuine Christianity has entered into its formation.

It is not external actions then, but the spirit of actions, the motives from which they spring, or the

moral ingredients of which they are composed, which you are called to examine, in ascertaining your true character. There must be a tracing of actions back to their origin, in the interior of the soul, a detecting of their primary impulses, a separating of these impulses from every thing casual or secondary, a bringing of them, as thus separated, to the test of Christian sentiment and Christian law, and a decision pronounced upon them, according to this test, if you wish to throw light on the momentous question, whether you are, or are not, "created anew in Christ Jesus." Not only is it necessary that all this should be done, but you must be the doer of it, for it is properly your business; and, under the eye of Heaven's omniscience, with the aids of his word and Spirit, it is yours alone, for no creature else is in possession of the secrets which enter essentially into its details.

But if such inquiries are necessary, to show you to yourselves, and thereby to clear your way to confidence and joy in religious exercise, you cannot entertain a doubt, that often-repeated recurrence to them is indispensable to their proper management. The inference indeed is unavoidable, that, if the work you have got to perform be at once so delicate and so arduous—if your comfort here, and preparations for futurity, depend so much on the right performance of it,—and if the responsibilities which it involves, belong to you, and admit of no transfer to any other, then surely you are the person, if a person there be in the moral universe, who cannot afford to lose an hour, or neglect a single opportunity, which can be improved for its advancement. The

more you solemnly think of the subject, the more certain must the conclusion appear, that if the secrets of your heart are to be sought out, and inspected so very minutely, there must be seasons, at which you carry it away from every sort of intercourse with every other heart, secluding it entirely from the living world, giving it back to itself in the presence of its Almighty Proprietor, stirring it up to wakeful research, and constraining it to take itself to task, and account to itself for the precious things entrusted to it, and even for the very spirit of these emotions which have gone out of it in the business of secular or religious life. Estrangement from this exercise, is sure to perpetuate estrangement from self-knowledge, and always to deny yourself time for the exercise on any ground whatever, is to allow the paramount business of life to go into fearful confusion.

These thoughts we offer the reader, as a very appropriate counterpart, if not a direct continuation, of our Essay to Judge Hale "On the Knowledge of Christ Crucified." There we attempted to show, that the knowledge of the true God, of our moral relations to him as the Great Supreme, and of that dispensation which he has revealed, to deliver us from sin and misery, is infinitely superior to the most splendid attainments in science and philosophy. Here we introduce the knowledge of ourselves, as absolutely indispensable to a saving improvement of the dispensation of mercy. And we earnestly solicit the reader to keep these two topics distinctly in his view, in perusing the pages of Sir Matthew

Hale, as well as the Volume now before him ; for he cannot separate the one from the other, in his efforts for personal religious improvement, without the certainty of greatly perplexing his meditations and inquiries. So exactly do they reciprocate in their influence and illuminations, that the one is utterly unattainable without the aid of the other. We can never know ourselves, except in as far as the light of the knowledge of God in Christ unfolds us to ourselves, by dispelling the darkness of our own understandings ; and we can never know God in that remedial dispensation, which discloses his mercy, except in as far as our conceptions are just, and our feelings suitable, about our own inward moral condition. But, if we prosecute the two together, eliciting from the one its illustrations of the other, in humble dependance on the spirit of grace, we may look for rapid advancement in our acquaintance with practical piety, and be able to say, with ravishments of delight, “ This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

It was with feelings of high satisfaction, that we placed the former Essay under the suffrage of a name, so celebrated as that of Sir Matthew Hale, and it is with emotions somewhat similar, that we connect the present Essay with the volume before us. We have but touched the subject of Self-knowledge; or endeavoured to awaken the reader’s attention to its difficulty and importance, and if we have succeeded in exciting a desire for instruction in this most interesting department, our end is accomplished ; as there are ample means of gratifying that desire, in the extended Treatise now to be introduced.

BAXTER'S Treatise on the "MISCHIEFS OF SELF-IGNORANCE, AND BENEFITS OF SELF-ACQUAINTANCE," is less known to the reading public than most of his other works, not because it is less valuable, but because it has not been regularly supplied in separate and successive editions. Its excellence consists, not in doctrinally unfolding the economy of grace, or in *directly* pressing upon the reader the necessity of "repentance towards God, or faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," but in tracing out the involutions of that most intricate economy of thought and feeling, judgment and action, moral liking and moral antipathy, which exists entire, and works apart in the bosom of every individual; and in this way it is powerfully subservient to repentance and faith, by disturbing the apathy, and combatting the ignorant indifference, which so fatally shut them out from men's consciences and hearts. Its general scheme of thought is instructively arranged; and although its topics are numerous, they are not diffusely treated, while, under each of them, there is a rich variety of illustrative matter, judiciously selected, and very aptly introduced. It is idle to say more of its manner of writing, than that it is the manner of Richard Baxter; showing the man in every page, but clear, concise, and simple, beyond several of his other pieces, while it is second to none of them in persuasive eloquence and impressive fervour, clothing thoughts, which are not familiar, in very conspicuous language, and adapting itself, with uncommon felicity, to the inexperienced and the undisciplined. The whole style and spirit of the work is exactly suited to the nature of the subject, and we do think it well enti-

tled to a place among *the few books*, which the Parent selects for his child, or the Pastor for the young of his flock, or the Guardian for his pupil, *as a means of awakening religious inquiry, and forming habits of early reflection.*

In conclusion, we would say to our youthful readers, to whom the science of moral self-acquaintance is a region unexplored, this is peculiarly a book for you. If other books be more copious in evangelical sentiment, few can better prepare you for appreciating such sentiment. If it be sparing in the balm of inward consolation, it is fitted to awaken those sensibilities, which alone can impel you to seek for consolation. If it fill you with alarm, by unfolding the extent to which sin has so fearfully unmade you, it may also shut you up to the happy conclusion, that "there is not another name, given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ." But read it patiently, topic after topic, at seasons consecrated to reflective secrecy, and with the honest determination to use it as a mirror in which to look yourself full in the face. And to give you courage for this, consider the tremendous fact, that while you are a perishing sinner, placed within the reach of Heaven's forgiving clemency, yet ignorance of yourself is hopeless incapacity for the use of this stupendous privilege. God has given you a reasonable soul, a very prominent attribute of which is, the power of discerning its own operations, and thereby conducting its education for eternity. You have fallen into sin, with its curse upon your head, and its manifold evil agencies constantly at work within you. In this con-

dition, so dismal and so desperate, he has brought near to you a great salvation, which commences with the remission of sins, and terminates in the glories of immortality. He is urging this salvation on your instant acceptance, and positively “waiting to be gracious.” But while you know not yourself, you cannot accept it in any sense which can ever avail you; and while your knowledge of yourself is limited and erring, through your culpable neglect of means, you cannot possibly prosper, even after you have accepted it, in the daily use of its spiritual benefits. Attainment in the one department, must ever be measured by attainment in the other, just because you have a reasonable soul, which must be accounted for to Him who gave it. Know yourselves, and you shall know God; judge yourselves, and you shall not be judged.

D. Y.

PERTH, *December*, 1828.

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SELF-ACQUAINTANCE.

2 COR. XIII. 5.

“ Know ye not your own selves.”

INTRODUCTION.

Directions to those who would be acquainted with themselves.

HE that is a stranger to himself, his sin, his misery, his necessity, &c. is a stranger to God, and to all that might denominate him wise or happy. To have taken the true measure of our capacities, abilities, infirmities, and necessities, and thereupon to perceive what is really BEST FOR US, and most agreeable to our case, is the first part of true, practical, saving knowledge. Did the distracted mindless world consider, what work they have at home for their most serious thoughts, and care, and diligence, and of what unspeakable concern and necessity it is, and that men carry within them the matter of their final doom, and the beginning of endless joy or sorrows, they would be called home from their busy idleness, their laborious loss of precious time, and unprofitable vagaries, and would be studying their hearts, while

they are doting about a multitude of impertinencies, and would be pleasing God, while they are purveying for the flesh; and they would see that it more concerneth them to know the day of their salvation, and now to lay up a treasure in heaven, that they may die in faith, and live in everlasting joy and glory, than in the crowd and noise of the ambitious, covetous, voluptuous sensualists, to run after a feather, till time is past, and mercy gone, and endless woe hath unexpectedly surprised them. Yet do these dead men think they live, because they laugh, and talk, and ride, and go, and dwell among gnats and flies in the sunshine, and not with worms and dust in darkness: they think they are awake, because they dream that they are busy; and that they are doing the works of men, because they make a noise for finer clothes, and larger rooms, and sweeter morsels, than their poorer, undeceived neighbours have: they think they are sailing to felicity, because they are tossed up and down: and if they can play the pike among the fishes, or the wolves in the flocks of Christ; or if they can attain to the honour of a pestilence, to be able to do a great deal of hurt, they are proud of it, and look as high as if they saw neither the grave nor hell, nor knew how quickly they must be taken down, and laid so low, that “the righteous shall see it, and fear, and laugh at them, saying, Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.—Behold these are the ungodly [that prosper in the world, and increase in riches; surely they are set in slippery places, and cast down to destruction, and brought to desolation

as in a moment, and utterly consumed with terrors : as a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.” Though, while they lived, they blessed themselves, and were praised by men ; yet, when they die, they carry nothing away ; “ their glory shall not descend after them ; like sheep they are laid in the grave : death shall feed on them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning ; man in honour abideth not : he is like the beasts that perish ; this their way is their folly ; yet their posterity approve their sayings.” They shall find that God is not afraid to lay the hand of justice on the stoutest of them, and will be as bold with silken, shining gallants, as with the poorest worms ; and will spit in the face of that man’s glory, who durst spit in the face of the glory of his Redeemer, and will trample upon the interest which is set up against the interest of Christ. The jovial world do now think that self-study is too melancholy a thing, and they choose to be distracted for fear of being melancholy ; and will be mad, in Solomon’s sense, that they may be wise and happy in their own : “ The heart of fools is in the house of mirth, and the heart of the wise in the house of mourning.” And yet there is most joy in the hearts of the wise, and least solid peace in the hearts of fools : they know that conscience hath so much against them, that they dare not hear its accusations and its sentence : they dare not look into the hideous dungeon of their hearts, nor peruse the accounts of their bankrupt souls, nor read the history of their impious, unprofitable lives, lest they should be tormented before the time : they dare not live like

serious men, lest they should lose thereby the delights of brutes. O sinful men ! against what light, both natural and supernatural, do they offend ! They see how all things haste away ; the names of their predecessors are left as a warning to them : every corpse that is carried to the grave, being dead, yet speaketh ; and every bone that is thence cast up, doth rise as a witness against their luxury and lust : and yet they will have their wills and pleasure while they may, whatever it cost them ; and they will set their houses on fire, that they might have one merry blaze, and warm them once before they die.

I shall give a few directions to those that would be well acquainted with themselves, and would comfortably converse at home.

Direct. 1. Let him not overvalue or mind the deceitful world, that would have fruitful converse with God and with himself. Trust not such a cheater as hath robbed so many thousands before us, especially when God and common experience call out to us to take heed. The study of riches, and reputation, and pleasures, agreeth not with this study of God, and of our hearts : and though the world will not make acquaintance with us, if we come not in their fashion, nor see us, if we stand not on the higher ground ; yet it is much better to be unknown to others, than to ourselves. A retirement, therefore, must be made, from the inordinate pursuit of worldly things, and the charms of honours, riches, and delights : and if some present loss does seem to follow, it is indeed no loss, which tendeth to gain. Methinks they that sincerely pray, “ Lead us not into temptation,” should not desire to have bolts and

bars between God and them, and to dwell where salvation is most hardly attained ! Desire not to be planted in any such place, though it seem a paradise, where God is most unknown, and used as a stranger, and where saints are wonders, and examples of serious piety are most rare, and where a heavenly conversation is known but by reports, and reported of according to the malice of the servant, and represented but as fancy, hypocrisy, or faction : where sin most prospereth, and is in least disgrace ; and where it is a greater shame to be a saint than to be a sinner ; a serious Christian, than a seared, stupified sensualist. Bless you from that place where the weeds of vice are so rank, that no good plant can prosper near them : where gain is godliness ; and impiety is necessary to acceptable observance ; and a tender conscience, and the fear of God, are characters of one too surly and unpliant to be countenanced by men ; where the tongue, that nature formed to be the index of the mind, is made the chief instrument to hide it ; and men are so conscious of their own incredibility, that no one doth believe or trust another : where no words are heart-deep, but those that are spoken against Christ's cause and interest, or for their own ; where a vile person is honoured, and those contemned that fear the Lord. Bless you from the place where truth is intolerable, and untruth cloaked with its name ; where holiness is looked at as an owl or enemy, and yet hypocrisy must steal its honour from it ; where he is a saint that is less wicked than infamous transgressors ; and where Dives' life is blameless temperance ; and where pride, idleness, fulness of bread, and filthy

fornication and lasciviousness, are the infirmities of pious and excellent persons; where great sins are small ones, and small ones are none; and where the greatest must have no reproof, and the physician is taken for the greatest enemy; where chaff is valued at the price of wheat, and yet the famine is of choice: where persons and things are measured by interest; and duty to God derided as folly, whenever it crosseth the wisdom of the world, and hated as some hurtful thing, when it crosseth fleshly men in their desires: and where Dives' brethren are unwarned; and none are more secure and frolicsome, than those that to-morrow may be in hell. Old travellers are usually most addicted to end their days in solitude; learn to condemn the world at cheaper rates than they: neither hope, nor wish to live an Alexander, and die a Socrates: a crowd or concourse, though the greatest, where there is the greatest tumult of affairs, and confluence of temptations, is not the safest place to die in; and I have most mind to live where I would die. Where men are Christians in name, and infidels in conversation, the sweetness of their Christian names will not preserve them or you from the danger of their unchristian lives. It was not the whole of Lot's deliverance to be saved from the flames of Sodom, but it was much of it to be freed from their malicious rage, and filthy grievous conversations: the best medicine against the plague is to keep far enough from the place that hath it. Desire not that condition, where all seem friends, but none are friends indeed; but they that seem to be your servants, are by flattery serving themselves by you: where few persons or things are truly re-

presented; but men are judged of by the descriptions of their enemies, and the lambs have the skins and names of wolves: and the best are odious when bold calumniators load them with odious accusations. In a word, desire not the place where the more men seek, the less they find, and the more they find, the less they have; and the more they have, the less they do enjoy: where the more are their provisions, the less are their supplies; the more their wealth, the more their want; the more their pleasure, the less their peace; the greater their mirth, the less their joy; the greater their confidence, the less their safety: where the great mistake about their happiness, their best interest, their end, doth make their lives a constant error, and death a dolcful disappointment.

Direct. 2. Keep all clean and sound within, that there may be little of loathsomeness to disaffect you, or terror to frighten you from yourselves; it is a frightful thing to be much conversing with a guilty soul, and hearing the accusations of a conscience not cleansed by the blood of Christ: and it is an unpleasant thing to be searching in our wounds, and reading the history of a life of folly; especially of wilful sin, and of ungrateful neglect of offered grace. Make not such work for yourself, if you love it not. We make our beds ill, and then we are weary of them, because they are so hard: our comforts are more in our own hands than in any others: the best friend or pastor cannot do so much to promote them, nor the greatest enemy so much to destroy them, as ourselves. If we will surfeit, and make ourselves sick, we must endure it. If

wasps and vipers be our guests, no wonder if we dwell not quietly at home; and if we sit not at ease, when we carry thorns about us. Folly and concupiscence breed our misery: it is the scent and smart of our ulcerated minds that most annoyeth us. We cannot waste our peace, and have it. Turk and Pope, and all the terrible names on earth, are not so deservedly terrible to a sinner as his own: the nearest evil is the most hurtful evil. If a scolding wife be such a continual dropping, and troublesome companion, as Solomon tells us, what then is a distempered, troubled mind, and a chiding conscience? It is a pity that man should be his own afflieter, but so it is. Folly, and lust, and rashness, and passion, are sorry keepers of our peace: darkness and filth do make a dungeon, and not a delightful habitation of our hearts; God would take pleasure in them, if we kept them clean, and would walk with us in those gardens, if we kept them dressed: but if we will defile his temple, and make it unpleasing to him, he will make it unpleasing to us. Terror and trouble are the shadow of sin, that follow it, though the sun shine ever so brightly. Keep close to God; obey his will: make sure of your reconciliation and adoption; keep clear your evidences, and grieve not the Holy Spirit, who sealeth you, and must comfort you. And then it will do you good to look into your heart, and there you shall find the most delightful company: and the Spirit that you have there entertained, will there entertain you with his joys.

But if disorder have prevailed and made your hearts a place of trouble, yet fly not from it, and re-

fuse not to converse with it: for though it be not at the present a work of pleasure, it is a work of necessity, and may tend to pleasure in the end: conversing wisely and faithfully with a disordered, troubled heart, is the way to make it a well-ordered and quiet heart.

Direct. 3. In judging of your present state and actions, let one eye be always on the end: this will both quicken you to be serious in the duty, and direct you in all particular cases to judge aright. As the approach of death doth convince almost all men of the necessity of studying themselves, and calleth them to it from all other studies; so the considerate foresight of it would do the same in better time. And it is the end that communicateth the good or evil to all things in the way: and therefore, as they have relation to the end, they must be judged of. When you peruse your actions, consider them as done by one that is entering into eternity, and as those that must all be opened in a clearer light. If we separate our actions in our considerations from their ends, they are not of the same signification, but taken to be other things than indeed they are. If the oaths, the lies, the slanders, the sensuality of impure sinners, had not relation to the loss of heaven, and to the pains of hell, they were not matters of that exceeding moment as now they are. And if the holiness, obedience, and watchfulness of believers, had no relation to the escaping of hell-fire, and the attainment of eternal life, they would be of lower value than they are. The more clearly men discern that God is present, that judgment is at hand, that they are near to heaven or hell, where millions

have already received their reward, the more seriously will they study, and the better will they know themselves.

Direct. 4. Though you must endeavour to judge yourself truly as you are, yet rather incline to think meanly than highly of yourself, and be rather too suspicious than too presumptuous. My reasons for this direction are, because man's nature is generally disposed to self-exalting; and pride and self-love are sins so common and so strong, that it is a thing or wondrous difficulty to overcome them, so far as to judge ourselves impartially, and to err as little in our own cause, as if it were another's; and because self-exalting hath far more dangerous effects than self-abasing, supposing them to exceed their bounds. Prudent humility is a quieting grace, and avoideth many storms and tempests, which trouble and shake the peace of others. It maketh men thankful for that little as undeserved, which others repine at as short of their expectations: it telleth the sufferer that God doth afflict him much less than he deserveth; and causeth him to say, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." It teacheth us a cautious suspicion of our own understandings, and a just submission to those that are wiser than ourselves. Pride keepeth out wisdom, by keeping out the knowledge of our ignorance. And as Pliny tells us of some nations, where they are grey-headed in their infancy, and black-headed when they are old; so pride maketh many wise so soon, that they never come to be truly wise: they think in youth that they have more than the wisdom of age, and therefore in age they have

less than what beseemeth them in youth. Every hard report or usage is ready to break a proud man's heart; when contempt doth little disquiet the humble, because they judge so meanly of themselves. The proud are frequently disturbed, because they climb into the seats of others; when humility sits quietly, and no one bids it rise, because it knoweth and keepeth its own place. Therefore it is, that true contrition having once told us of our folly to the heart, doth make us walk more circumspectly while we live; and that no man is better resolved than he that was once in doubt, and that no man standeth faster than he that hath had a fall: and no man is more safe, than he that hath had most assaults. If you love your safety, desire not either to be, or to seem too high. Be little in your own eyes, and be content to be so in the eyes of others. As for worldly greatness, affect neither the thing nor the reputation of it: look up, if you please, to the tops of steeples, masts, and mountains; but stand below if you would be safe. And for spiritual endowments, desire them, and improve them; but desire not inordinately the reputation of them. It seldom increaseth a man's humility to be reputed humble: and though humility help you to bear applause, yet the remnants of pride are ready to take fire, and other sins to get advantage by it.

Direct. 5. Improve your self-acquaintance to a due apprehension of what is most suitable, most profitable, and necessary for you, and what is most hurtful, unsuitable, and unnecessary. He that hath taken a just measure of himself, is the better able to judge of all things else. How suitable will

Christ and grace appear, and how unsuitable will worldly pomp appear to one that truly knows himself! How suitable will serious, fervent worship appear, and how unsuitable the ludicrous shows of hypocrites! If a man knew aright the capacity and tendency of the reasonable nature, and the evil of sin, and the necessity and distress of an unrenewed soul, what sweet, what longing thoughts would he have of God, and all that tendeth to the pleasing and enjoying of him! How little would he think himself concerned in the trivial matters of honour or dishonour, riches or poverty, favour or displeasure, further than as they help or hinder him in the things that are of more regard! Know yourself, and you will know what to love and what to hate; what to choose and what to refuse; what to hold and what to lose; what to esteem and what to slight; what to fear, and when to be courageous and secure: the curing the dotage thus, would cure the night-walks of the dreaming, vagrant world. And they that find that music cureth not the stone or gout, would know that mirth and gallantry, and vainglory, are no preservatives from hell, nor a sufficient cure for a guilty soul: and that if an aching head must have a better remedy than a golden crown, and a diseased body a more suitable cure than a silken suit, a diseased soul doth call for more.

Direct. 6. Value not yourself by mutable accidents, but by the essence and substance of Christianity. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance which he possesseth." Paul knew better what he said, when he accounted all but loss and dung for the knowledge and fruition of Jesus Christ, than they

that dote on wealth as their felicity. And is a man to be valued, applauded, and magnified for his wealth, or for his personal endowments? Judge not of the person by his apparel, when the foolishlest and the worst may wear the same. The master and inhabitants honour the house more than the house doth the master and inhabitants. All the wit and learning in the world, with all the riches, honour, and applause, yea, and all the civility and winning deportment, will not make a Christian of an infidel or atheist, nor a happy of a miserable man. As nothing will make a man honourable indeed, that hath not the use of reason, which differenceth men from brutes; so nothing will make or prove him holy, or happy, or safe, that hath not the holy image of God, which must difference his children from his enemies. If he be unsanctified, and be not a new creature, and have not the Spirit of Christ within him, he is an atheist, or infidel, or an ungodly wretch, let him be ever so rich, or great, or honourable. And as a harlot is never beautiful in the eyes of the wise and chaste, so a wicked man is never happy in the eyes of any but his phrenetic society.

Direct. 7. Think not that a few, seldom, hasty thoughts will bring, and keep you in acquaintance with yourself. It must be diligent observation, and serious consideration, that must accomplish this. Many a man walketh where he doth not dwell. A transient salute is not a sign of intimate familiarity. It is enough, sometimes to step into your neighbour's house for a charitable visit; but you must dwell in your own: be more busy and censorious at home than the proud and malicious are abroad; and

be as seldom and tender in censuring others, as such hypocrites are in censuring themselves. Think not that you are unconcerned in the danger or safety of your neighbour, but remember that you are more concerned in your own. It is here most reasonable to say, that charity begins at home, when self-neglect will disable you to help another. And if, sometimes, your falls or frailty do find you matter for purging, troublesome thoughts, and interrupt your sweeter, comfortable meditations, refuse not the trouble when you have made it necessary : it is many a sad and serious thought that the ministers of Christ have for the cure and safety of their flocks : and should not the people have as serious thoughts for themselves ? Your reason, your wisdom, care, and diligence, are more your own than any one's else ; and, therefore, should be more used for yourself than for any. And if, after much thoughtfulness and labour, you find your heart to be no whit better, yet labour and believe. It is not the last blow of the axe alone that cuts down the tree, though it fall not till the last. The growth of grace, as of plants, and fruits, and flowers, is not perceived by immediate inspection. There is much good obtained when we discern it not : and nothing is more certain, than that honest diligence is never lost in the things of God and our salvation. It is worth all our labour, if we grow no better, to keep our spark from going out, and to see that we grow no worse. And the preventing of evil is here an excellent good. "O keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Actions receive their specification and quality from the

earth. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, but the tongue is in the power of the heart."

Direct. 8. Let not your self-knowledge be merely speculative, but also practical. Be not contented that you know what you are, and what you have done, nor that your heart is much affected with it; but let all tend to action, to mend what is amiss, and to maintain, improve, and increase what is good: and let the next question be, 'What am I now to do?' or, 'What must I be for time to come?' It is a lamentable mistake of many, that tire themselves with striving to make deep, affecting impressions on their hearts; and when they have got much sorrow, or much joy, they think they have done the greatest matter, and there they stop. But affections are the spring that must move to action; and if you proceed not to your duty, affection is much lost; and, if with smaller affection or passion, you can steadfastly and resolutely cleave to God, and do your duty, you have the principal thing, and are accepted: not that outward actions are accepted without the heart; but that there is most of the heart, where there is most of the estimation and will, though less of passion; and there is most of will, where there is most endeavour: and inward action is the first part of obedience; and without these no speculations will avail. However you find your heart, be up and doing in the use of means to make it better, and wait on God for further grace.

Direct. 9. Manage your self-acquaintance prudently, cautiously, and with the help of your skilful friend or pastor. Think not that it is a work that

you need no helper in : if you mistake your accounts, and put down a wrong sum, and call yourself confidently what you are not, or deny God's graces, whenever, through melancholy or distemper, you cannot find them, and pass false conclusions against God's mercies and yourself, this were to turn a duty into a sin and snare.

And you must do it seasonably : melancholy persons are most incapable of it, who do nothing but pore upon themselves to little purpose ; such must do more of other duty, but lay by much of this till they are more capable, and make much use of the judgment of their guides. And weaker heads must take but a due proportion of time for self-searching meditations, lest they contract that troublesome disease : duties must be used with profitable variety, and all done under good advice. But young persons, and those that are yet unconverted, have need to fall upon it without delay ; and to follow it till they have made sure their calling and election. O what a dreadful thing it is, for a man to come newly to the study of his soul, as a thing that he is unacquainted with, when sickness is upon him, and death at hand, and he is ready to pass into another world ! To be then newly to ask, ' What am I ? ' and, ' What have I done ? ' and, ' Whither am I going ? ' and, ' What will become of me for ever ? ' is a most fearful state of folly.

Direct. 10. Terminate not your knowledge ultimately in yourself ; but pass up unto God in Christ, and to the blessed privileges of the saints, and the joyful state of endless glory, and there let your meditations be most frequent and most sweet.

CHAPTER I.

Wherein Self-Knowledge consists.

THE Corinthians, being much abused by false teachers, to the corrupting of their faith and manners, and the questioning of the Apostle's ministry, he acquainteth them in my text with an obvious remedy for both these maladies; and lets them know, that their miscarriages call them to question themselves, rather than to question his authority or gifts, and that if they find Christ in themselves, they must acknowledge him in his ministry.

He, therefore, first, most importunately urgeth them to the immediate duty of self-examination: "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves." Self-examination is but the means of self-knowledge. This, therefore, he next urgeth, first, in general, by way of interrogation, "Know ye not your own selves?" and then, more particularly, he tells them, what it is of themselves, that it most concerneth them to know, "How that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." As if he should say, 'Alas, poor souls; you have more cause to question yourselves than me: go to, therefore, examine and prove yourselves. It is a shame for a man to be ignorant of himself. Know ye not your own selves? Either Christ is in you, by faith, and by his Spirit, or he is not: if he be not, you are yet but reprobates, that is, disapproved of God, and at present in a forsaken, or condemned

state yourselves; (which is a conclusion that you will be loath to admit, but more concerneth you :) if Christ be in you, it was by the means of my ministry; and, therefore, that ministry hath been powerful and effectual to you, and you are my witnesses; the seal of my ministry is upon your own souls: Christ within you bears me witness, and therefore, of all men, you have least cause to question or quarrel with my ministry.'

This paraphrase opening all that may seem difficult in the text, I shall immediately offer you a double observation, which the words afford us; first, as considered in themselves, and then, as respecting the inference for which they are premised by the Apostle.

The first is, that *All men should know themselves : or, it is a shame for a man to be unacquainted with himself.*

The second is, that *Not knowing ourselves is the cause of other errors : or, The knowledge of ourselves, would much conduce to the cure of many other errors.*

In handling this, I shall show you,

I. What it is to know ourselves.

II. How far it is, or is not, a shame to be ignorant of ourselves.

III. What evils follow this ignorance of ourselves, and what benefits self-knowledge would procure.

IV. How we should improve this doctrine by application and practice.

I. Self-knowledge is thus distinguished according to the object.

1. There is a physical self-knowledge: when a man knows what he is as a man; what his soul is, and what his body, and what the compound called *man*. The doctrine of man's nature, or this part of physics, is so necessary to all, that it is first laid down, even in the Holy Scriptures, in Genesis, chap. i. ii. iii. before his duty is expressed. And it is pre-supposed in all the moral passages of the Word, and in all the preaching of the Gospel. The subject is pre-supposed to the adjuncts. The subjects of God's kingdom belong to the constitution; and, therefore, to be known before the legislation and judgment, which are the parts of the administration. Morality always pre-supposeth nature. The species is in order before the separable accidents. Most ridiculously, therefore, doth ignorance plead for itself against knowledge, in them that cry down this part of physics, as human learning, unnecessary to the disciples of Christ. What excellent, holy meditations of human nature do you find oft in Job, and in David's Psalms, concluding in the praise of the incomprehensible Creator, "I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well."

2. There is a moral self-knowledge very necessary. And this is, the knowing of ourselves in relation to God's law, or to his judgment. The former is the knowledge of ourselves in respect of our duty: the second, in respect of the reward or punishment. And both of them have respect to the law of nature, and works, or to the remedying law of grace.

The ethical knowledge of ourselves, or that which respecteth the precept of our duty, is twofold. The

first is, as we have performed that duty. The second, as we have violated the law by non-performance or transgression. The first is, the knowledge of ourselves as good; the second as evil. And both are either the knowledge of our habits, (good or evil,) or of our acts; how we are morally inclined, disposed, or habituated; or what, and how we have done: we must know the good estate of our nature that we are created in; the bad estate of sinful nature that we are fallen into; the actual sin committed against the law of nature, and what sin we have committed against the law of grace; and whether we have obeyed the call of the gospel of salvation or not. So that as man's state, considered ethically, is threefold, the state of upright nature; the state of sin, original and actual; and the state of grace; we must know what we are in respect to every one of these.

And as to the judicial knowledge of ourselves, that is, as we stand related to the promises, and threatenings, the judgment, the reward and punishment; we must know, first, what is due to us according to the law of nature, and then, what is due to us according to the tenor of the law of grace. By the law of nature or of works, death is the due of fallen mankind; but no man by it can lay claim to heaven. All men are under its curse or condemnation, till pardoned by Christ; but no man can be justified by it. By the promise of the Gospel, all true believers, renewed and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, are justified, and made the sons of God, and heirs of everlasting glory. To know whether we are yet delivered from the condemnation of the

law, and whether our sins are pardoned or not, and whether we are the children of God, and have any part in the heavenly glory; is much of the self-knowledge that is here intended in the text, and that which most nearly concerneth the solid comfort of our souls.

II. But is all self-ignorance a shame, or dangerous?

Ans. 1. It is no other shame, than what is common to human frailty, to be ignorant of much of the mystery of our natural generation, constitution, integral parts, and temperament. There is not a nerve, or artery, or vein, nor the breadth of a hand, from head to foot, but hath something unknown to the most excellent philosopher on earth. This little world called *man*, is a compound of wonders. Both soul and body have afforded matter of endless controversy, and voluminous disputations, to the most learned men; which will not admit of a full decision, till we are past this state of darkness and mortality.

2. There are many controversies about the nature, derivation, and punishment of original sin, which a humble and diligent Christian may possibly be ignorant of.

3. The degrees of habitual sin, considered simply, or proportionably and respectively to each other, may be much unknown to many that are willing and diligent to know: and so many divers actual sins, such as we know not to be sin, through our imperfect understanding of the law; and such as, through frailty, in a crowd of actions, escape our particular observation. And the sinfulness or aggravations of

every sin, are but imperfectly known and observed by the best.

4. The nature and beauty of the image of God, as first planted on created man, and since restored to man redeemed : the manner of the Spirit's access, operation, testimony, and inhabitation, are all but imperfectly known by the wisest of believers. The frame, or admirable composure or contexture of the new man, in each of the renewed faculties ; the connection, order, beauty, and special use of each particular grace, are observed but imperfectly by the best.

5. The very uprightness and sincerity of our own hearts, in faith, hope, love, repentance, and obedience, is usually unknown to young beginners in religion ; and to the weaker sort of Christians, how old soever in profession, and to melancholy persons, who can have no thoughts of themselves but sad and fearful, tending to despair ; and to lapsed and declining Christians, and also to many an upright soul, from whom, in some cases of special trial, God seems to hide his pleased face. And though these infirmities are their shame, yet are they not the characters or prognostics of their misery and everlasting shame.

6. The same persons must needs be unacquainted with the justification, reconciliation, adoption, and title to everlasting blessedness, as long as they are uncertain of their sincerity. Yea, though they uprightly examine themselves, and desire help of their guides, and watch and pore continually upon their hearts and ways, and daily beg of God to acquaint them with their spiritual condition, they may yet

be so far unacquainted with it, as to pass an unrighteous judgment on themselves, and condemn themselves when God hath justified them.

But, 1. To be continually ignorant of the excellency and capacity of your immortal souls. 2. To be void of an effectual knowledge of your sin and misery, and need of the remedy. 3. To think you have saving grace, when you have none; that you are regenerate by the Spirit, when you are only sacramentally regenerate by baptism; that you are the members of Christ, when it is no such matter; that you are justified, adopted, and the heirs of heaven, when it is not so; all this is doleful and damnable unacquaintedness with yourselves.

To be unacquainted with a state of grace, when you are in such a state, is sad and troublesome, and brings many and great inconveniences. But to be unacquainted with a state of death, when you are in it, doth fasten your chains, and hinder your recovery. To be willing and diligent to know your state, and yet be unable to attain to assurance and satisfaction, is common to many true believers; but to be ignorant of it because you have no grace to find, and because you mind not the matters of your souls, or think it not worth your diligent consideration or inquiry, this is the case of the miserable despisers of salvation.

CHAPTER II.

The Mischiefs of Self-Ignorance.

1. ATHEISM is cherished by self-ignorance. The knowledge of ourselves as men, doth greatly conduce to our knowledge of God. Here God is known but darkly, and as in a glass, and by his image, and not as face to face. And, except his incarnate and his written Word, what glass revealeth him so clearly as the soul of man? We bear a double image of our Maker: his natural image in the nature of our faculties; and his moral image in their holy qualifications, in the nature of grace, and frame of the new man. By knowing ourselves, it is easy to know that there is a God; and it much assisteth us to know what he is, not only in his attributes and relations, but even in the Trinity itself. He may easily know that there is a primitive being and life that knoweth he hath himself a derived being and life. He must know that there is a Creator, that knoweth he is a creature. He that findeth a capacious intellect, a will and power in the creature, and that is conscious of any wisdom and goodness in himself, may well know that all these are infinite in the first cause that must thus have in itself whatsoever it doth communicate. He that knoweth that he made not, and preserveth not himself, may well know that he is not his own, but his that made him and preserveth him, who must needs be his absolute Proprietor and Lord. He that knoweth that he is

an intellectual moral agent, and therefore can act morally, and is moved by moral means; and that he is a social creature, a member of the universe, living among men, may well be sure, that he is made to be a subject, and governed by laws, and by moral means to be directed and moved to his end; and, therefore, that none but his absolute Lord, the Infinite Wisdom, Goodness, and Power, can be his absolute and highest sovereign. He that is convinced that he is, he lives, he hopeth, and enjoyeth all that is good, from a superior bounty, may be sure that God is his principal Benefactor. And to be, ‘The first and infinite being, intellect, will, power, wisdom, goodness, and cause, of all things; the absolute Owner, the most righteous Governor, and the most bounteous Benefactor,’ is to be God. This being the description of Him that is so called; such a description as is fetched from his created image, man, and expressed in the terms that himself hath chosen, and used in his word, as knowing that if he will be understood by man, he must use the notions and expressions of man; and though these are spoken but analogically of God, yet are there no fitter conceptions of him that the soul of man, in flesh, is capable of. So that the atheist carrieth about him that impress and evidence of the Deity, which may convince him, or condemn him for his foolishness and impiety. He is a fool, indeed, that “saith in his heart there is no God,” when that heart itself, in its being, and life, and motion, is his witness; and soul and body, with all their faculties, are nothing but the effects of this Almighty Cause. And when they prove that there

is a God, even by questioning or denying it, being unable, without him, so much as to deny him; that is, to think, or speak, or be. As if a fool should write a volume, to prove that there is no ink or paper in the world, when it is ink and paper by which he writes.

And whether there be no representation of the Trinity in unity in the nature of man, let them judge that have well considered, how in one body there are the natural, vital, and animal parts, and spirits; and in one life or soul, there are the vegetative, sensitive, and rational faculties; and in one rational soul as such, there are an intellect, will, and executive power, morally perfected by wisdom, goodness, and promptitude to well-doing. As in one sun there are light and heat, and moving force. So that man is both the beholder and the glass; the reader and the book; he is the index of the Godhead to himself; yea, partly of the Trinity in unity. We need not say, Who shall go up into heaven? Saith Seneca himself, by the light of nature, "God is nigh us; with us; within us; a holy Spirit resideth within us; the observer of our evil and good, and our preserver; he useth us as he is used by us; no good man is without God." Saith Augustine, "God is in himself as the Alpha and Omega; in the world as its governor and author: in angels, as their sweetness and comeliness; in the church, as the master of the family in his house; in the soul, as the bridegroom in his bed-chamber; in the righteous, as their helper and protector," &c. and as all declareth him, so all should praise him.—
 "Let the mind be exercised in loving him, the tongue

in singing him, the hand in writing him; let these holy studies be the believer's work."

2. He that knoweth himself, may certainly know that there is another life of happiness or misery for man, when this is ended. For he must needs know, that his soul is capable of a spiritual and glorious felicity with God, and of immaterial objects, and that time is as nothing to it, and transitory creatures afford it no satisfaction or rest; and that the hopes and fears of the life to come, are the divine engines, by which the moral government of the world is carried on; and that the very nature of man is such, as that, without such apprehensions, hopes, and fears, he could not, in a connatural way, be governed, and brought to the end, to which his nature is inclined and adapted; but the world would be as a wilderness, and men as brutes. And he may well know that God made not such faculties in vain, nor suited them to an end which cannot be attained, nor to a work which would prove but their trouble and deceit; he may be sure that a mere probability or possibility of an everlasting life, should engage a reasonable creature in all possible diligence, in piety and righteousness, and charity to attain it: and so religious and holy endeavours become the duty of man as man; there being few such infidels or atheists to be found on earth, as dare say, they are sure there is no other life for man; and, doubtless, whatsoever is by nature and reason made man's duty, is not delusory and vain: nor is it reasonable to think that falsehood, frustration, and deceit, are the ordinary way by which mankind is governed by the most wise and holy God. So that, the end of man

may be clearly gathered from his nature ; forasmuch as God doth certainly suit his works to their proper use and ends. It is, therefore, the ignorance of ourselves, that makes men question the immortality of souls ; and, I may add, it is the ignorance of the nature of conscience, and of all morality, and of the reason of justice among men, that makes men doubt of the discriminating justice of the Lord, which is hereafter to be manifested.

3. Did men know themselves, they would better know the evil and odiousness of sin. As poverty and sickness are better known by feeling than by hearsay ; so also is sin. To hear a discourse, or read a book of the nature, prognostics, and cure of the plague, consumption, or dropsy, doth little affect us, while we seem to be sound and safe ourselves : but when we find the malady in our flesh, and perceive the danger, we have then another manner of knowledge of it. Did you but see and feel sin as it is in your hearts and lives, as oft as you read and hear of it in the law of God, I dare say sin would not seem a jesting matter, nor would those be censured as too precise, that are careful to avoid it, any more than they that are careful to avoid infectious diseases, or crimes against the laws of man, that hazard their temporal felicity or lives.

4. It is want of self-acquaintance that keeps the soul from kindly humiliation : that men are insensible of their spiritual calamities, and lie under a load of unpardoned sin and God's displeasure, and never feel it, nor loathe themselves for all the abominations of their hearts and lives, nor make complaint to God or man with any seriousness and sense. How many

hearts would be filled with wholesome grief and care, that now are careless and almost past feeling ! and how many eyes would stream forth tears that now are dry, if men were but truly acquainted with themselves ! It is self-knowledge that causeth the solid peace and joy of a believer, as conscious of that grace that warranteth his peace and joy : but it is self-deceit and ignorance that quieteth the presumptuous, that walk as carelessly, and sleep as quietly, and bless themselves from hell as confidently, when it is ready to devour them, as if the bitterness of death were past, and hypocrisy would never be discovered.

5. It is unacquaintedness with themselves that makes Christ so undervalued by the unhumiliated world : that his name is revered, but his office and saving grace are disregarded. Men could not set so light by the physician, that felt their sickness, and understood their danger. Were you sensible that you are under the wrath of God, and shall shortly and certainly be in hell, if Christ, received by a hearty, working, purifying faith, do not deliver you, you would have more serious, savoury thoughts of Christ, more yearnings after him, more fervent prayers for his healing grace, and sweet remembrance of his love and merits, example, doctrine, and inestimable benefits, than lifeless hypocrites ever were acquainted with. Imagine with what desires and expectations the diseased, blind, and lame, cried after him for healing to their bodies, when he was on earth. And would you not more highly value him, more importunately solicit him for your own souls, if you knew yourselves ?

6. It is unacquaintedness with themselves that makes men think so unworthily of a holy, heavenly conversation ; and that possesseth them with foolish prejudices against the holy care and diligence of believers. Did men but value their immortal souls, as reason itself requireth them to do, is it possible they should venture so easily upon everlasting misery, and account it unnecessary strictness in them that dare not be as desperately venturous as they, but fly from sin, and fear the threatenings of the Lord ? Did men but consider the worth and concern of their souls, is it possible they should hazard them for a thing of naught, for the favour of superiors, or the transitory pleasures and honours of the world ? Could they think the greatest care and labour of so short a life to be too much for the securing of their salvation ? Could they think so many studious careful days, and so much toil, to be but meet and necessary for their bodies, and yet think all too much that is done for their immortal souls ? Did men but practically know that they are the subjects of the God of heaven, they durst not think the diligent obeying of him to be a needless thing, when they like that child or servant best, that is most willing and diligent in their service. Alas ! were men but acquainted with their weakness, and sinful failings, when they have done their best, and how much short the holiest persons come of what they are obliged to by the laws and mercies of the Lord, they durst not make a scorn of diligence, nor hate or blame men for endeavouring to be better, that are sure, at best, they shall be too bad. When the worst of men, that are themselves the greatest

neglecters of God and their salvation, shall cry out against a holy life, and making so much ado for heaven, (as if a man that lieth in bed should cry out against working too much or going too fast,) this shows men's strangeness to themselves. Did the careless world but know themselves, and see where they stand, and what is before them, and how much lieth on this inch of time; did they but know the nature and employment of a soul, and why their Creator placed them for a little while in flesh, and whither they must go when time is ended, you should then see them in that serious frame themselves, which formerly they disliked in others: and they would then confess, that if any thing in the world deserved seriousness and diligence, it is the pleasing of God, and the saving of our souls.

7. It is for want of acquaintance with themselves, that men are so deceived by the vanities of the world; that they are drowned in the love of pleasures and sensual delights; that they are so greedy for riches, and so desirous to be higher than those about them, and to waste their days in the pursuit of that which will not help them in the hour of their extremity. Did the voluptuous sensualist know aright that he is a man, he would not take up with the pleasures and felicity of a brute, nor enslave his reason to the violence of his appetite. He would know that there are higher pleasures which besee a man; even those that consist in the well-being and integrity of the soul, in peace of conscience, in the favour of God, and communion with him in the Spirit, in a holy life, and in the forethoughts and hopes of endless glory.

Did the covetous worldling know himself, he would know that it must be another kind of riches that must satisfy his soul, and that he hath wants of another nature to be supplied: and that it more concerneth him to lay up a treasure in heaven, and think where he must dwell for ever, than to accommodate this perishing flesh, and make provision with so much ado, for a life that posteth away while he is providing for it: he would rather make him friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, and lay up a foundation for the time to come, and labour for the food that never perisheth, than to make such a stir for that which will serve him so little a while; that so he might hear “Well done, thou good and faithful servant,” &c. rather than “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?”

Self-knowledge would teach ambitious men, to prefer the calmest, safest station before the highest; and to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and to please him most carefully that hath the keys of heaven and hell; and to be content with food and raiment in the way, while they are ambitious of a higher glory. It would tell them, that so dark and frail a creature should be more solicitous to obey than to have dominion; and that large possessions are not the most congruous or desirable passage to a narrow grave; and that it is the highest dignity to be an heir of heaven. Would men but spend some hours in the study of themselves, and seriously consider what it is to be a man, a sinner, a passenger to an endless life, an expectant of so great a change, and withal to be a professed believer, what a change

would it make in their cares, and their desires and conversations ! “ What strive you for, O worldlings ? what is here but a brittle glass full of dangers ? and by how many dangers must you come to greater dangers ? Away with these vanities and toys, and let us set ourselves to see the things that have no end.”—*Augustine*.

8. It is for want of self-acquaintance that any man is proud. Did men considerately know what they are, how quickly would it bring them low ! Would corruptible flesh, that must shortly turn to loathsome rottenness, be stout and lordly, and look so high, and set forth itself in gaudy ornaments, if men did not forget themselves ? Did rulers behave themselves as those that are subjects to the Lord of all, and have the greatest need to fear his judgment, and prepare for their account : did great ones live as men that know that rich and poor are equal with the Lord, who respects not persons ; and that they must speedily be levelled with the lowest, and their dust be mixed with the common earth, what an alteration would it make in their deportment and affairs ! and what a mercy would it prove to their inferiors and themselves ! If men that swell with pride of parts, and overvalue their knowledge, wit, or elocution, did know how little indeed they know, and how much they are ignorant of, it would much abate their pride and confidence. The more men know indeed, the more they know to humble them. It is the novices ; that, “ being lifted up with pride, do fall into the condemnation of the devil.” They would loathe themselves if they knew themselves.

9. It is self-ignorance that makes men rush upon

temptations, and choose them, when they customarily pray against them. Did you know what tinder lodgeth in your natures, you would guard your eyes and ears, and appetites, and be afraid of the least spark; you would not be indifferent as to your company, nor choose a life of danger to your souls, for the pleasing of your flesh; to live among the snares of honour, or beauty and bravery, or sensual delights; you would not wilfully draw so near the brink of hell, nor be looking on the forbidden fruit, nor dallying with allurements, nor hearkening to the deceiver or his messengers. It is ignorance of the weakness and badness of your hearts, that maketh you so confident of yourselves, as to think that you can hear any thing, and see any thing, and approach the snare, and treat with the deceiver without any danger. Self-acquaintance would cause more fear and self-suspicion.

If you should escape well a while in your self-chosen dangers, you may catch that at last that may prove your woe. Temptation puts you on a combat with the powers of the earth, and flesh, and hell! And is toil and danger your delight? "Danger is never overcome without danger," saith Seneca. It is necessary valour to charge through all which you are in; but it is temerarious fool-hardiness to seek for danger, and invite such enemies, when we are so weak. Goliath's "give me a man to fight with," is a prognostic of no good success. Rather foresee all your dangers to avoid them; understand where each temptation lieth, that you may go another way if possible. "Chastity is endangered in delights; humility in riches; piety in business; truth in too

much talk; and charity in this world.”—*Bernard*. Alas! did we but think what temptations did with a Noah, a Lot, a David, a Solomon, a Peter, we would be afraid of the enemy and weapon that such worthies have been wounded by, and of the quicksands where they have so dangerously fallen. When Satan durst assault the Lord himself, what hope will he have of such as we? When we consider the millions that are blinded, and hardened, and damned by temptations, are we in our wits if we will cast ourselves into them?

10. Self-acquaintance would confute temptations, and easily resolve the case when you are tempted. Did you considerably know the preciousness of your souls, and your own concerns, and where your true felicity lieth, you would abhor allurements, and encounter them with that argument of Christ, “What shall it profit a man, if he win the world and lose his soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” The fear of man would be conquered by a greater fear, as the Lord commandeth: “And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear; fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear him.”

11. It is unacquaintedness with themselves, that makes men quarrel with the word of God, rejecting it when it suits not with their deceived reason, and to be offended with his faithful ministers, when they cross them in their opinions or ways, or deal with them with that serious plainness, which the weight of the case, and their necessity doth require. Alas, sirs!

if you were acquainted with yourselves, you would know that the holy rule is straight, and the crookedness is in your conceits and misapprehensions; and that your frail understandings should rather be suspected than the word of God; and that your work is to learn and obey the law, and not to censure it; and that quarrelling with the holy word which you should obey, will not excuse, but aggravate your sin; nor save you from the condemnation, but fasten it, and make it greater. You would know that it is more wisdom to stoop than to contend with God; and that it is not your physicians, nor the medicine, that you should fall out with, but the disease.

12. Self-acquaintance would teach men to be charitable to others, and cure the common censoriousness, and envy, and malice of the world. Hath thy neighbour some mistakes about the disputable points of doctrine, or doubtful modes of discipline or worship? Is he for the opinion, or form, or policy, or ceremony, which thou dislikest? Or is he against those which thou approvest? Or afraid to use them, when thou thinkest them laudable? If thou know thyself, thou dardest not break charity or peace for this. Thou dardest not censure or despise him: but wilt remember the frailty of thy own understanding, which is not infallible in matters of this kind; and in many things is certainly mistaken, and needs forbearance as well as he. Thou wouldst be afraid of inviting God or man to condemn thyself, by thy condemning others; and wouldst think with thyself: 'If every error, of no more importance, in persons that hold the essentials of religion, and conscientiously practise what they know, must go for heresy,

or make men sectaries, or cut them off from the favour of God, or the communion of the church, or the protection of the magistrate, and subject them to damnation, to misery, to censures, and reproach; alas, what then must become of so frail a wretch as I, of so dark a mind, of so blameable a heart and life, that am like to be mistaken in matters so great, where I least suspect it !' It is ignorance of themselves, that makes men so easily think ill of their brethren, and entertain all hard or mis-reports of them, and look at them so strangely, or speak of them so contemptuously and bitterly, and use them so uncompassionately, because they are not in all things of their opinion and way. They consider not their own infirmities, and that they teach men how to use themselves. The falls of brethren would not be over-aggravated, nor be the matter of insult or contempt, but of compassion, if men knew themselves. This is implied in the charge of the Holy Ghost: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted: bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." The Pharisee, that seeth not the beam of formality and hypocrisy in his own eye, is most censorious against the motes of tolerable particular errors in his brother's eye. None more uncharitable against the real or supposed errors or slips of serious believers, than hypocrites, that have no saving, serious faith and knowledge, but place their religion in opinion and show, and wholly err from the path of life.

13. It is ignorance of themselves that makes men

divide the church of Christ, and pertinaciously keep open its bleeding wounds, and hinder concord, and disturb its peace. How far would self-acquaintance go to the cure of all our discords and divisions ! Is it possible that the Pope should take upon him the government of the antipodes, even of all the world, (and that, as to spiritual government, which requireth more personal attendance than secular,) if he knew himself, and consequently his natural incapacity, and the terror of his account for such a usurped charge ? Self-acquaintance would depose their inquisitions, and quench their flames ; and make them know what spirit they are of, that inclineth not to save men's lives, but to destroy them. Did they know themselves, the Papists durst not multiply new articles of faith, and ceremonies, and depart from the ancient simplicity of the Gospel, and turn the Creed or Scripture into all the volumes of their councils, and say, “ All these decrees or determinations of the church are necessary to salvation ;” and so, make the way of life more difficult, if not impossible, (had they indeed the keys,) by multiplying their supposed necessities. Did they but know themselves aright, it were impossible they should dare to pass the sentence of damnation on the far greater part of the Christian world, because they are not subject to their pretended Vice-Christ. Durst one of the most leprous, corrupted sort of Christians in the world unchurch all the rest that will not be as bad as they, and condemn all other Christians as heretics or schismatics, either for their adhering to the truth, or for errors and faults, far smaller than their own ? Did they know themselves and their

own corruptions, they durst not thus condemn themselves, by so presumptuous and blind a condemnation of the best and greatest part of the Church of Christ, which is dearest to him, as purchased by his blood. If either the Protestants, or the Greeks, or the Armenians, Georgians, Syrians, Egyptians, or Ethiopian Churches, be in as bad and dangerous a case, as these usurping censurers tell the world they are, what then will become of the tyrannous, superstitious, polluted, blood-thirsty Church of Rome?

What is it but self-ignorance that perverteth the unsettled among us, and sends them over to the Roman tenets? No man could rationally become a Papist, if he knew himself. Let me prove this to you in these four instances:

1. If he had but the knowledge of his natural senses, he could not take them to be all deceived, (and the senses of all others as well as his) about their proper object; and believe the priests, that bread is no bread, or wine no wine, when all men's senses testify the contrary.

2. Some of them turn Papists because they see some differences among other Christians, and hear them call one another by names of contumely and reproach; and therefore they think that such can be no true Churches of Christ: but if they knew themselves, they would be acquainted with more culpable errors in themselves, than those for which many others are reproached; and see how irrational a thing it is to change their religion upon the scolding words or slanders of another; or, which is worse, upon their own uncharitable censures.

3. Some turn to the Papists, as apprehending

their ceremonious kind of religion to be an easier way to heaven than ours: but if they knew themselves, they would know that is a more solid and spiritual sort of food that their nature requires, and a more searching physic that must cure their diseases; and that shells and chaff will not feed, but choke and starve their souls.

4. All that turn Papists, must believe that they were unjustified and out of the catholic church before, and consequently void of the love of God and special grace: for they receive it as one of the Romish articles, that out of their church there is no salvation. But if these persons were indeed before ungodly, if they knew themselves, they would find that there is a greater matter necessary, than believing in the Pope, and turning to that faction; even to turn to God by faith in Christ, without which no opinions or profession can save them. But if they had the love of God before, then they were justified, and in the church before; and therefore Protestants are of the true church, and it is not confined to the Roman subjects: so that if they knew this, they could not turn Papists without a palpable contradiction.

The Papists' fugitives tell us, we are no true ministers, nor our ministry effectual and blessed of God. What need we more than imitate Paul, when his ministry was accused, and call them to the knowledge of themselves, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith? Prove yourselves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" If they were ungodly, and void of the love of God, while they were under our ministry, no wonder if they turn Papists. For

it is just with God, that those that “receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved, be given over to strong delusions to believe a lie.” But if they received themselves the love of God in our churches by our ministry, they shall be our witnesses against themselves.

And others as well as Papists would be kept from church divisions, if they did but know themselves. Church governors would be afraid of laying things unnecessary, as stumbling-blocks before the weak, and of laying the unity and peace of the church upon them; and casting out of the vineyard of the Lord, and out of their communion, all such as are not, in such unnecessary or little things, of their opinion. The words of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, so plainly and fully deciding this matter, would not have stood so long in the Bible, as utterly insignificant, in the eyes of many rulers of the churches, if they had known themselves, as having need of their brethren’s charity and forbearance. “Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations: for one believeth that he may eat all things, another, that is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not, (much less destroy him, or excommunicate him,) and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth; yea he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike: let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” “Let us not there-

fore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way." "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." "For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men." "We then that are strong, ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God." Self-acquaintance would help men to understand these precepts; and be patient with the weak, when we ourselves have so much weakness, and not to vex or reject our brethren for little or unnecessary things, lest Christ reject or grieve us that have greater faults.

Self-acquaintance, also, would do much to heal the dividing humour of the people; and instead of separating from all that are not of their mind, they would think themselves more unworthy of the communion of the church, than the church of their's.

Self-acquaintance makes men tender and compassionate, and cureth a censorious, contemptuous mind. It also silenceth passionate, contentious disputes, and makes men suspicious of their own understandings, and therefore forbiddeth them intemperately to condemn dissenters. It also teacheth men to submit to the faithful directions and conduct of their pastors; and not to vilify, forsake, and disobey them, as if they were above them in understanding, and fitter to be guides themselves; so that in all these respects, it is ignorance of themselves that makes

men troublers of the church, and the knowledge of themselves would much remedy it.

14. And it is ignorance of themselves also, that makes men troublers of the state. A man that doth not know himself, is unfit for all society: if he be a ruler, he will forget the common good, and instead of clemency and justice, will violently exercise an imperious will. If he be a subject, he will be censuring the actions of his rulers, when distance and unacquaintance makes him an incompetent judge. He will think himself fitter to rule than they, and whatever they do, he imagineth that he could do it better. And hence comes suspicions and murmurings against them, and Corah's censures, "Ye take too much upon you: are not all the people holy?" Were men acquainted with themselves, their weaknesses, and their duties, they would rather inquire whether they obey well, than whether their superiors rule well; and would think the lowest place to be most suitable to them; and would quiet themselves in the discharge of their own duty, "making supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." It would quiet all the seditions and tumults of the world, if men were well acquainted with themselves.

15. Self-acquaintance would end abundance of controversies, and very much help men to discern the truth. In the controversy of free-will, or human power; to know ourselves as we are men, would be to know that we have the natural power and freedom

consisting in the self-determining faculty and principle. To know ourselves as sinful, would inform us how much we want of the moral power which consisteth in right inclinations, and the moral liberty, from vicious dispositions and habits. Would time permit, I might show it in the instances of original corruption, of the nature of grace, of merit, the cause of sin, and many other controversies, how much error is promoted by the ignorance of ourselves.

16. Self-acquaintance maketh men both just and merciful. One cannot be so much as a good neighbour without it, nor yet a faithful friend. It will teach you to put up with injuries, and to forgive; as remembering that you are likely to be injurious to others, and certainly are daily so to God. It is such only that “with all lowliness, and meekness, and long-suffering, forbear one another in love,” and “recompense to no man evil for evil,” and “be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” He that is drawn to passion and revenge, is overcome when he seems to overcome by that revenge. It teacheth us to forgive, to know that much is forgiven us by Christ, or at least, what need we have of such forgiveness. “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” O that this lesson were well learned!

17. Self-acquaintance will teach us the right estimate of all our mercies: when we know how unworthy we are of the least, and what it is we prin-

cipally need; it will teach us thankfulness for all, and teach us which of our mercies to prefer. Men know not themselves and their own necessities, and therefore they slight their chief mercies, accounting them burdens, and are unthankful for the rest.

18. Self-acquaintance is necessary to the solid peace and comfort of the soul. Security and stupidity may quiet the ungodly for a while, and self-flattery may deceive the hypocrite into a dream of heaven; but he that will have a durable joy, must find some matter of joy within him, as the effects and evidence of the love of God, and the prognostics of his endless love. To know what Christ hath suffered, and done, and merited, and promised, is to know the general and principal ground of our rejoicing; but something is wanting to make it peace and joy to us, till we find the fruits of his Spirit within us, without which no man can be his. “If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.” The seal, and witness, and beginnings of life, must be within you, if you will know that you are the heirs of life.

19. Self-ignorance causeth men to misinterpret and repine at the providence of God, and to be forward under his most righteous judgments. Because men know not what they have deserved, and what is good for them, they know not the reason and intent of Providence; and therefore they quarrel with their Maker, and murmur as if he did them wrong: when self-acquaintance would teach them to

justify God in all his dealings, and resolve the blame of all into themselves. The nature of man doth teach all the world, when any hurt is done to societies or persons, to inquire by whose will, as well as by whose hands, it was perpetrated; and to resolve all the crimes that are committed in the world into the will of man, and there to leave the guilt and blame, and not excuse the malefactors upon any pretence of the concurrence or predetermination of the first or any superior cause: and to justify the judge and executioner that takes away men's lives, or estates, as long as themselves are proved to deserve it. And surely the knowledge of the nature and depravity of man should teach us to deal as equally with God, and finally resolve all guilt and blame into the free and vitiated will of man. Humbling self-knowledge maketh us say, with Job, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth:" and when God is glorifying himself on our relations, or ourselves, by his judgments, it teacheth us, with Aaron, to hold our peace, and to say, with Eli, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." And with David, "If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord he will bring me again, and show me it, and his habitation: But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold here am-I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him." And as the afflicted church, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." Even a Pharaoh, when affliction hath taught him a little to know himself, will say, "The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." When Rehoboam and his princes are humbled, they say, "The Lord is righteous."

20. Lastly, it is for want of the knowledge of ourselves, that precious time is so much lost, and coming death no more prepared for. Did we carry still about us the sensible knowledge of our mortality, and the inconceivable change that is made by death, we should then live as men that are continually waiting for the coming of their Lord; and as if we still beheld our graves. For we carry about us that sin and frailty, such corruptible flesh, as may tell us of death as plainly as a grave or a skeleton. So great, so unspeakably necessary a work, as the serious, diligent preparation for our end, could not be so sottishly neglected by the ungodly, did they thoroughly and feelingly know what it is to be a mortal man; what it is to have an immortal soul; what it is to be a sinner; and what it is to pass into an endless life of joy or misery.



CHAPTER III.

Self-Ignorance detected and reproved.

AND now I may suppose, that the best of you all, the most honourable, the most learned, the most religious, (of them I dare affirm it,) will acknowledge, that I want not sufficient reason to urge you, with the question in my text, “Know ye not your own selves?” Judge by the forementioned effects, whether self-acquaintance, even in the most weighty and necessary respects, be common among professed Christians. Doth he duly know himself as a man,

that doubteth of a Deity, whose image is his very essence, though not the moral image that must be produced by renewing grace? Or he that doubteth of a particular Providence, of which he hath daily and hourly experience? Or he that doubteth of the immortality of his soul, or of the life to come, which is the end of his creation and endowments, and is legibly engraven on the nature and faculties of his soul? Do they morally know themselves, that make a jest of sin; and make it their delight? That bear it as the lightest burden, and are not so much humbled by all the distempers and miseries of their souls, as they would be by a leprosy, an imprisonment, or disgrace? That have as cold, unthankful thoughts of Christ, and of his grace and benefits, as a sick stomach of a feast? That compliment him at the door, but will not be persuaded to let him in, unless he will come upon their terms, and dwell with their unmortified sin, and be a servant to their flesh, and leave them their worldly prosperity and delights, and save them for these fruits of the flesh, when sin and the world shall cast them off?

Do those men truly know themselves, that think they need not the Spirit of Christ for regeneration, conversion, and sanctification; nor need a diligent, holy life; nor to be half so careful and serious for their salvation, as they are for a shadow of happiness in the world? That would, without entreaty, bestir themselves if their houses were on fire; and yet think he is too troublesome and precise, that entreateth them to bestir themselves for heaven, and to quit themselves like men for their salvation; and to

look about them, and spare no pains for the escaping everlasting misery ; when this is the time, the only time, when all this must be done, or they are utterly undone for ever.

Do they know themselves, and what they want, and what indeed would do them good, that itch after sensual delights, and please their appetites and lusts, and waste their time in needless sports, and long for honour and greatness in the world, and study for preferment more than for salvation, and think they can never stand too high nor have too much . as if it were so desirable to fall from the highest pinnacle, or to die forsaken by that, for which they forsook the Lord.

Do our feathered, gaudy gallants, or our frizzled, wanton dames, understand what it is that they are so proud of, or do so carefully trim up and adorn ? Do they know what flesh is, as they would do, if they saw the comeliest of their companions, when he hath lain a month, or twelve months, in the grave ? Do they know what sin is, as a sight of hell would make them know, or the true belief of such a state ? If they did, they would think that another garb doth better beseem such miserable sinners ; and that persons in their ease have something else to mind, than toyishly to spruce up themselves like handsome pictures for men to look upon ; and something else to spend their hours in, than dalliance and compliments, and unnecessary ornaments ; and that the amiable and honourable beauty, and comeliness, and worth, consisteth in the holy image of God, the wisdom and heavenly endowments of the soul, and in a heavenly, charitable, righteous conversation, and good works ;

and not in a curious dress or gaudy attire, which a fool may wear as well as a wise man, and a Dives, that must lie in hell, when a Lazarus may lie in sores and rags.

Do they know themselves that fear no snares, but choose the life of the greatest temptations and danger to their souls, because it is highest, or hath most provision for the flesh? and that think they can keep in their candle in the greatest storms, and in any company maintain their innocency? And yet, cannot understand so much of the will of God, nor of their own interest and danger, as to resist a temptation when it comes, though it offer them but the most inconsiderable trifle, or the most sordid and unmanly lust.

Do they know themselves, that are prying into unrevealed things, and will be wise, in matters of theology, above what is written? That dare set their shallow brains, and dark, unfurnished understandings, against the infallible word of God; and question the truth of it, because it suiteth not with their lame and carnal apprehensions; or, because they cannot reconcile what seemeth to them to be contradiction; nor answer the objections of every bold and ignorant infidel? In a word, when God must not be God unless he please them; nor his word be true, unless it be all within the reach of them, that never employed the time and study to understand it, as they do to understand the books that teach them languages, arts, and sciences, and treat of lower things: and when Scripture truth must be called in question, as oft as an ignorant eye shall read it, or an unlearned, graceless person mis-

understand it: when offenders, that should bewail and reform their own transgressions of the law, shall turn their accusations against the law, and call it too precise or strict, and believe and practise no more than stands with their obedience to the law of sin, and will quarrel with God, when they should humbly learn, and carefully obey him; and despise a life of holy obedience, instead of practising it; and in effect, behave themselves, as if they were fitter to rule themselves and the world than God is; and as if it were not God, but they, that should give the law, and be the judge; and God were the subject, and man were God? Do you think, that sinful, creeping worms, that stand so near the grave and hell, do know themselves, when they think, or speak, or live according to such unreasonable arrogance? Do they know themselves, that reproach their brethren for human frailties, and difference of opinion in modes and circumstances, and errors smaller than their own? And that, by calling all men heretics, sectaries, or schismatics, that differ from them, do tempt men to turn infidels or Papists, and to take us all for such as we account each other? And that, instead of receiving the weak in faith, whom God receiveth, will rather cast out the most faithful labourers, and cut off Christ's living members from his church, than forbear the imposing of unnecessary things? I dare say, were it not for unacquaintedness with our brethren and ourselves, we should put those in our bosoms as the beloved of the Lord, that now we load with censures and reproaches: and the restoring of our charity would be the restoring of our unity. If blind men would make laws for

the banishment of all that cannot read the smallest characters, you would say, they had forgot themselves. Nay, when men turn Papists or Separatists, and fly from our churches, to shun those that perhaps are better than themselves, and to get far enough from the smaller faults of others, while they carry with them far greater of their own; when people are more apt to accuse the church than themselves, and say the church is unworthy of their communion, rather than that they are unworthy the communion of the church, and think no room in the house of God is clean and good enough for them, while they overlook their own uncleanness; when men endure a hundred calumnies to be spoken of their brethren, better than a plain reprehension of themselves; as if their persons only would render their actions justifiable, and the reprover culpable; judge whether these men are well acquainted with themselves.

What, should we go further in the search, when, in all ages and countries of the world, the unmercifulness of the rich, the murmuring of the poor, the hard usage by superiors, the disobedience of inferiors, the commotions of the state, the wars and rebellions that disquiet the world, the cruelty, covered with pretences of religion, the unthankfulness for mercies, the murmuring under afflictions, too openly declare that most men have little knowledge of themselves; to conclude, that when we see that none are more self-accusing and complaining than the most sincere, and none more self-justifying and confident than the ungodly, careless souls; that none walk more heavily, than many of the heirs of life,

and none are merrier than many that must lie in hell for ever : that all that a minister can say, will not convince many upright ones of their integrity, nor any skill or industry suffice to convince most wicked men that they are wicked ; nor, if our lives lay on it, we cannot make them see the necessity of conversion, nor know their misery, till feeling tell them it is now too late : when so many walk sadly and lamentingly to heaven ; and so many go fearlessly and presumptuously to hell, and will not believe it till they are there ; by all this judge, what work self-ignorance maketh in the world.

“Know thyself,” is many a man’s motto, that is a stranger to himself, as the house may be dark within that hath the sign of the sun hanging at the door. It is easy to say, men should know themselves, and out of the book or brain, to speak of the matters of the heart : but, indeed to know ourselves as men, as sinners, as Christians, is a work of greater difficulty, and such as few are well acquainted with : Shall I go a little further in the discovery of it ?

1. Whence is it that most are so unhumbled ; so great and good in their own esteem ; so strange to true contrition and self-abhorrence, but that they are voluntary strangers to themselves ? To loathe themselves for sin, to be little in their own eyes, to come to Christ as little children, is the case of all that know themselves aright. And Christ made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a servant, and set us a pattern of the most wonderful humiliation that ever was performed, to convince us of the necessity of it, that have sin to humble us, when he had none. “Learn of me, for I am meek

and lowly." And one would think it were a lesson easily learned by such as we, that carry about us, within and without, so much sensible matter of humiliation. "Had Christ bid us learn of him to make a world, to raise the dead, and work miracles, the lesson had been strange: but to be meek and lowly is so suitable to our low condition, that if we knew ourselves we could not be otherwise."—*Augustine*.

To be holy without humility, is to be a man without the essentials of nature, or to build without a foundation. It is the contrite heart that is the habitation and delight of God on earth; the acceptable sacrifice. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be brought low." We must not overvalue ourselves, if we would have God esteem us; we must be vile and loathed either in his eyes or our own. "It is specifical to the elect to think more meanly of themselves than they are."—*Gregory*. But I urge you not to err in your humility. It were low enough, if we were as low, in our own esteem, as we are indeed: which self-acquaintance must procure. **H**e is least displeased with himself, that least knoweth himself; and he that hath the greatest light of grace, perceiveth most in himself to be reprehended."—*Gregory*. Illumination is the first part of conversion, and of the new creature; and self-discovery is not the least part of illumination. There can be no salvation without it, because no humiliation.

But how rare this is, let experience determine. To have a poor habitation, a poor attire, and perhaps of choice, (though that is not usual,) is much

more common than an humble soul. It is the most ill-favoured pride that stealeth some rags of humility to hide its shame. And saith Jerome truly, "It is easier to change our clothing than our mind, and to put off a gaudy habit, than our self-flattering, tumefied hearts." Many a one can live quietly without gold rings and jewels, or sumptuous houses and attendance, that cannot live quietly without the esteem and applause of men, nor endure to be accounted as indeed he is.

O therefore, as you would escape divine contempt, and the most desperate precipitation, know yourselves. For that which cast angels out of heaven, will keep you out, if it prevail. As Hugo acutely saith, "Pride was bred in heaven, (no otherwise than as death in life,) but can never hit the way thither again, from whence it fell." Open the windows of our breast to the Gospel light, to the laws of conviction, to the light of reason, and then be unhumbled if you can. Nature is low, but sin and wrath are the matter of our great humiliation, that have made us miserably lower.

2. The abounding of hypocrisy sheweth how little men are acquainted with themselves. I speak not here of that gross hypocrisy which is always known to him that hath it, but of that close hypocrisy, which is a professing to be what we are not, or to believe what we believe not, or to have what we have not, or to do what we do not. What article of faith do not most of us confidently profess? What petition of the Lord's Prayer will they not put up? Which of the Commandments will they not profess their obedience to? While the stream of their con-

versation testifieth, that in their hearts there is none of the belief, the desire, or the obedience, in sincerity, which they profess. Did they know themselves, they would be ashamed of the vanity of their profession, and of the miserable want of the things professed; and that God, who is so nigh their mouths, is so far from their hearts. If you heard an illiterate man profess, that he understandeth all the languages and sciences, or a beggar boasting of his wealth, would you take any of these to be the words of one that knows himself? Surely they are in the dark that spend their days in dreaming visions: but they have their eyes so much on the beholders, that they have no leisure to peruse themselves: they are so careful to be esteemed good, that they are careless of being what they seem.

Especially, if they practise not the vicious inclinations of their hearts, they think they have not the vice they practise not, and that the root is dead because it is winter: when it is the absence of temptations and occasions, and not of vicious habits or inclinations, that smooths their lives with seeming innocency, and keeps their sins from breaking forth to their own or others' observation. "The feeble vices of many lie hid: there are wanting instruments of drawing forth their wickedness. So a poisonous serpent may be safely handled, while he is stiff with cold, and yet it is not because he hath no venom, but because it is stupified: so it is with the cruelty, luxury, and ambition of many."—*Seneca*. The knowledge of yourselves is the bringing in of light into your souls, which will awaken you from the hypocrite's dream, and make such apparitions vanish.

Come near this fire, and the paint of hypocrisy will melt away.

3. The common impatience of plain reproof, and the love of flattery, show us how much self-ignorance doth abound. Most men love those that have the highest estimation of them, be it true or false. They are seldom offended with any for overvaluing them. They desire not much to be accounted well when they are sick, nor rich when they are poor, but to be accounted wise though they are foolish, and godly when they are ungodly, and honest and faithful when they are deceitful and corrupt: this is a courtesy that you must not deny them; they take it for their due. They will never call you heretics for such errors as these: and why is it, but because they err about themselves, and therefore would have others do so too.

A wise man loveth himself so well, that he would not be flattered into hell, nor die as Sisera or Samson, by good words, as the harbingers of his woe. He loveth ingenuous penitence so well, that he cannot love the flatterer's voice, that contradicteth it. Faithful reprovers are the messengers of Christ, that call us to repentance, that is, to life: unfaithful flatterers are the messengers of the devil, to keep us from repentance, and harden us in impenitency unto death. If we know ourselves, we shall know that when we are over-valued and over-praised as being being more learned, wise, or holy than we are, it is not we that are loved and praised; for we are not such as that love or praise supposeth us to be. Vices, like worms, are bred and erawl in the inward parts, unseen, unfelt of him that carrieth them about him;

and therefore, by the sweetmeats of flattery and sensuality, they are ignorantly fed: but it is bitter medicines that must kill them; which those only will endure, that know they have them, and what they are. You speak bitterly, saith the impatient sinner to the plain reprovcr; but such are sweet and excellent men that meddle not with the sore. But it is bitter things that are wholesome to your souls, that befriend your virtues. "Sermons, not piercing, but pleasing, are not wise," saith Jerome. But, alas! men follow the appetite of their vices, not only in choosing their meat, and drink, and company, and recreations, but also in the choice of the church that they will hold communion with, and the preachers that they will hear: and they will have the sweet, and that which their corruption loveth, come of it what will. Nay, pride hath got so great dominion, that flattery goeth for due civility; and he is accounted eynical or morose that useth it not. To call men as they are, or to tell them of their faults with necessary freedom, though with the greatest love, and caution, and deprecation of offence, is a thing that most, especially great ones, cannot digest. A man is supposed to rail, that speaketh without flattery; and to reproach them, that would save them from their sins. Saith Jerome, "The vice of flattery now so reigneth, and, which is worst, goeth under the name of humility and good-will, that he that knoweth not how to flatter is reputed envious or proud." Indeed, some men have the wit to hate a feigned hypocritical flatterer, and also modestly to take on them to disown the excessive commendations of a friend; but these mistaken, friendly flatterers,

seldom displease men at the heart. Saith Hieronymus, " We can say we are unworthy, and modestly blush ; but, within, the heart is glad at its own commendation." Saith Seneca, " We soon please ourselves to meet with those that call us good men, wise and holy : and we are not content with a little praise : whatever flattery heapeth on us without shame, we lay hold on it as due ; we assent to them that say we are the best and most holy, when we oftentimes know ourselves that they lie." All this is for the want of the true knowledge of themselves. When God hath acquainted a sinner effectually with himself, he quickly calleth himself by other names than flatterers do. With Paul he saith, " We ourselves were sometime foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures ;" that he was mad against the saints in persecuting them. He then speaks so much against himself, that, if tender ministers and experienced friends did not think better of him than he of himself, and persuade him to more comfortable thoughts, he would be ready to despair, and think himself unworthy to live upon the earth.

4. Judge also how well men know themselves, when you have observed, what different apprehensions they have of their own faults and of other men's ; and of those that are suitable to their dispositions or interests, and those that are against them. They seem to judge of the actions by the persons, and not of the persons by the actions. Though he be himself a sensualist, a worldling, drowned in ambition and pride, whose heart is turned away from God, and utterly strange to the mystery of regeneration and a heavenly life, yet all this is scarcely dis-

cerned by him, and is little troublesome, and less odious than the failings of another, whose heart and life is devoted to God. The different opinions, or modes and circumstances of worship, in another that truly feareth God, is matter of their severer censures and reproach, than their own omissions, and averseness, and enmity to holiness, and the dominion of their deadly sins. It seems to them more intolerable for another to pray without a book, than for themselves to pray without any serious belief, or love, or holy desire, without any feeling of their sins, or misery, or wants; that is, to pray with the lips without a heart; to pray to God without God, even without the knowledge or love of God, and to pray without prayers. It seemed to the hypocritical Pharisees, a greater crime in Christ and his disciples, to violate their traditions, in not washing before they eat, to break the ceremonious rest of their Sabbath by healing the diseased, or plucking ears of corn, than in themselves to hate and persecute the true believers and worshippers of God, and to kill the Lord of Life himself. They censured the Samaritans for not worshipping at Jerusalem, but censured not themselves for not worshipping God, that is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. Which makes me remember the course of their successors, the ceremonious Papists; that condemn others for heretics, and fry them in the flames, for not believing that bread is no bread, and wine is no wine, and that bread is to be adored as God, and that the souls of dead men know the hearts of all that pray to them in the world at once; and that the Pope is the vice-christ, and sovereign of all the Christians in the world; and for

reading the Scriptures, and praying in a known tongue, when they forbid it; and for not observing a world of ceremonies; when all their enmity to reason, piety, charity, humanity, all their religious tyranny, hypocrisy, and cruelty, do seem but holy zeal, and laudable in themselves. To lie, dissemble, forswear, depose and murder princes, is a smaller matter to them when the Pope dispenseth with it, and when it tends to the advantage of their faction, which they call the church, than to eat flesh on Friday, or in Lent, to neglect the mass, or images, or crossing, &c.

And it makes me remember Hall's description of a hypocrite, "He turneth all gnats into camels, and cares not to undo the world for a circumstance. Flesh on Friday is more abominable to him, than his neighbour's bed: he abhors more not to uncover at the name of Jesus, than to swear by the name of God, &c." It seems, that prelates were guilty of this in Bernard's days, who saith, "Our prelates strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel, while permitting greater matters, they discuss (or sift) the less. Excellent estimators of things indeed, that in smaller matters employ great diligence; but in the greatest, little or none at all." And the cause of all this partiality is, that men are unacquainted with themselves. They love and cherish the same corruptions in themselves, which they should hate and reprehend in others. And saith Jerome, "How can a prelate of the church reform the evil that is in it, that rusheth into the like offence? Or with what freedom can he rebuke a sinner, when his conscience secretly tells him, that he hath himself committed the same faults which he reproveth?"

Would men but first be acquainted with themselves, and pass an impartial judgment on the affections and actions that are nearest them, and that most concern them, they would be more competent, and more compassionate judges of their brethren, that are now so hardly used by them. It is excellent advice that Austin gives us: "When necessity constraineth us to reprove any one, let us think whether it be such a vice as we never had ourselves; and then let us think that we are men, and might have had it: or, if we once had such, but have not now, then let the remembrance of common frailty touch us, that compassion and not hatred may lead the way to our reproof: but if we find that we have the same vice ourselves, let us not chide, but groan, and move, (or desire) that we may both equally lay it by."

5. It shows how little men know themselves, when they must needs be the rule to all other men, as far as they are able to commend it; and that in the matters that men's salvation dependeth on, and in the smallest, tender, disputable points; and even in those things where themselves are most unfit to judge. In every controverted point of doctrine, (though such as others have much better studied than themselves,) he that hath strength to suppress all those that differ from him, must ordinarily be the umpire; so is it even in the modes and circumstances of worship. Perhaps Christ may have the honour to be called the King of the church, and the Scripture have the honour to be called his laws. But indeed it is they that would be the lords themselves; and it is their wills and words that must be

the laws; and this under pretence of serving Christ, and interpreting his laws; when they have talked the utmost for councils, fathers, church-tradition, it is themselves that indeed must be all these; for nothing but their own conceits and wills must go for the sense of decrees, or canons, fathers, or tradition. Even they that hate the power and serious practice of religion, would fain be the rule of religion to all others: and they that never knew what it was to worship God in spirit and truth, with delight and love, and suitableness of soul, would needs be the rule of worship to all others, even in the smallest circumstances and ceremonies. And they would be the governors of the church, or the determiners of its mode of government, that they would never be brought under the government of Christ themselves. If it please them better to spend the Lord's-day in plays or sports, or compliment or idleness, than in learning the will of God in his word, or worshipping him, and begging his mercy and salvation, and seriously preparing for an endless life, they would have all others do the like. If their full souls loathe the honey-comb, and they are weary of being instructed above an hour, or twice a day, they would have all others forced to their measure, that they may seem as diligent as others, when others are compelled to be as negligent as they. Alas! did men but know themselves, the weakness of their understandings, the sinful bias that personal interest and carnal inclinations have set upon their wills, they would be less arrogant and more compassionate, and not think, by making themselves as gods, to reduce the unavoidable diversities that will be found

among mankind, to a unity in conformity to their minds and wills, and that in the matters of God and salvation; where every man's conscience that is wise and faithful, will be tenacious of a double interest (of God and of his soul) which he cannot sacrifice to the will of any. But be so just as not to mistake and misreport me in all this, as if I pleaded for libertinism or disorder, or spoke against government, civil or ecclesiastical; when it is only private ambition, uncharitableness, and cruelty, and papal usurpations over the church and consciences of men, that I am speaking of; which men, I am sure, will have other thoughts of, when God hath made them know themselves, than they have while passion hindereth them from knowing what spirit they are of: they will then see, that the weak in faith should have been received, and that catholic unity is only to be founded in the universal Head, and End, and Rule.

6. The dreadful change that is made upon men's minds, when misery or approaching death awakes them, doth show how little they knew themselves before. If they have taken the true estimate of themselves in their prosperity, how come they to be so much changed in adversity? Why do they begin then to cry out of their sins, and of the folly of their worldliness and sensuality, and of the vanity of the honours and pleasures of this life? Why do they then begin to wish, with gripes of conscience, that they had better spent their precious time, and minded more the matters of eternity, and taken the course as those did whom they once derided, as making more ado than needs? Why do

they then tremble under the apprehensions of their unreadiness to die, and to appear before the dreadful God, when formerly such thoughts did little trouble them? Now there is no such sense of their sin or danger upon their hearts. Who is it now that ever hears such lamentations and self-accusations from them, as then it is likely will be heard? The same man that then will wish, with Balaam, that he might “die the death of the righteous, and that his latter end might be like his,” will now despise and grieve the righteous. The same man that then will passionately wish that he had spent his days in holy preparations for his change, and lived as strictly as the best about him, is now so much of another mind, that he perceives no need of all this diligence; but thinks it is timorous superstition, or at least, that he may do well enough without it. The same man that will then cry, ‘Mercy, mercy—O mercy, Lord, to a departing soul, that is laden with sin, and trembleth under the fear of thy judgment,’ is now perhaps an enemy to serious, earnest prayer, and hates the families and persons that most use it; or at least is prayerless, or cold and dull himself in his desires, and can shut up all with a few careless, customary words, and feel no pinching necessity to awaken him, importunately to cry and strive with God. Doth not all this show, that men are befooled by prosperity, and unacquainted with themselves, till danger or calamity call them to the bar, and force them better to know themselves.

Your mutability proveth your ignorance and mistakes. If indeed your case be now as good as present confidence or security do import, lament it not

in your adversity; fear it not when death is calling you to the bar of the impartial Judge. Cry not out then of your ungodliness and sensuality; of your trifling hypocrisy, your slight contemptuous thoughts of God, and of your casting away your hopes of heaven, by wilful negligence and delays. If you are sure that you are now in the right, and diligent, serious believers in the wrong, then stand to it before the Lord. Set a good face on your cause if it be good; be not down in the mouth when it is tried; God will do you no wrong: if your cause be good, he will surely justify you, and will not mar it. Wish not to die the death of the righteous; say not to them, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." If all their care, and love, and labour, in "seeking first the kingdom of God and its righteousness," be a needless thing, wish not for it in your extremity, but call it needless then. If fervent prayer may be spared now while prayer may be heard, and a few lifeless words that you have learned by rote may serve the turn, then call not on God when answering is past, seek him not when he will not be found. "When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you," cry not, "Lord, Lord, open unto us, when the door is shut." Call them not foolish then that slept, but them that watched, if Christ was mistaken, and you are in the right.

O sirs, stand but at the bedside of one of these ungodly, careless men, and hear what he saith of his former life, of his approaching change, of a holy or carnal course, whether a heavenly or worldly life is better, (unless God have left him to that de-

plorable stupidity which an hour's time will put an end to); hearken then whether he think that God or the world, heaven or earth, soul or body, be more worthy of man's chief care and diligence; and then judge whether such men did know themselves in their health and pride, when all this talk would have been derided by them as too precise, and such a life accounted over-strict and needless, as then they are approving and wishing they had lived. When that minister or friend should once have been taken for censorious, abusive, self-conceited, and unsufferable, that would have talked of them in that language as when death approacheth, they talk of themselves; or would have spoken as plainly, and hardly of them, as they will then do of themselves. Doth not this mutability show, how few men now have a true knowledge of themselves?

What is the repentance of the living, and the desperation of the damned, but a declaration that the persons repenting and despairing, were unacquainted with themselves before? Indeed the erroneous despair of men, while grace is offered them, comes from ignorance of the mercy of God, and willingness of Christ to receive all that are willing to return. But yet the sense of sin and misery, that occasioneth this erroneous despair, doth show that men were before erroneous in their presumption and self-esteem. Saith Bernard, "Both the knowledge of God and of thyself is necessary to salvation; because, as from the knowledge of thyself, the fear of God cometh into thee, and love from the knowledge of God: so, on the contrary, from the ignorance of thyself cometh pride; and from the ignorance of God comes desperation."

Poor men that must confess their sin and misery at last, would show a more seasonable acquaintance with themselves, if they would do it now, and say, with the prodigal, "I will arise and go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." In time, this knowledge and confession may be saving. Even a Seneca could say, without the Scripture, "The knowledge of sin is the beginning of recovery (or health): for he that knows not that he sinneth, will not be corrected. Reprehend thyself, therefore, as much as thou canst. Inquire into thyself: first play the part of an accuser, then of a judge: and lastly, of one that asketh pardon."

It is not because men are innocent or safe, that we now hear so little confession or complaint; but because they are sinful and miserable in so great a measure, as not to know or feel it. Saith Seneca, "Why doth no man confess his vices? Because he is yet in them. To tell his dreams is the part of a man that is awake: and to confess his faults, is a sign of health." If you call a poor man rich, or a deformed person beautiful, or a vile, ungodly person virtuous, or an ignorant barbarian learned, will not the hearers think you do not know them? And how should they think better of your knowledge of yourselves, if any of you that are yet in the flesh, will say you are spiritual? And those that hate the holiness, and justice, and government of God, will say they love him? Or those that are in a state of enmity to God, are as near to hell as the execution is to the sentence of the law, will persuade themselves and others, that they are the members of

Christ, the children of God, and the heirs of heaven? And take it ill of any that would question it, though only to persuade them to make it sure, and to take heed what they trust to, when endless joy or misery must be the issue!

7. Doth it not manifest how little men know themselves, when in every suffering that befalls them, they overlook the cause of all within them, and fall upon others, or quarrel with every thing that standeth in their way? Their contempt of God doth cast them into some affliction, and they quarrel with the instruments, and meddle not with the mortal cause at home. Their sin finds them out, and testifieth against them; and they are angry with the rod, and repine at providence, as though God himself were more to be suspected of the cause than they: yea, it is become with many, a serious doubt, whether God doth not necessitate them to sin; and, whether they omit not duty merely because he will not give them power to perform it; and, whether their sin be any other than a relation unavoidably resulting from a foundation laid by the hand of God himself. Do men know themselves, that will sooner suspect and blame the most righteous, holy God, than their own unrighteous, carnal hearts? “Man drinketh up iniquity like water, but there is no unrighteousness with God.” And is not such a frail and sinful wight, more likely to be the cause of sin than God? and to be culpable in all the ill that doth befall us?

And it shows, that men little know themselves, when all their complaints are poured out more fluently on others than themselves: like sick stomachs, that find fault with every dish, when the

fault is within them. If they want peace, content, or rest, they lay the blame on this place or that, this or that person or estate; they think if they had their mind in this or that, they should be well: and therefore they are still contriving for somewhat which they want, and studying changes, or longing after this or that, which they imagine would work the cure: when, alas, poor souls, the sin, the sickness, the want is in themselves! It is a wiser mind, a better, more holy, heavenly will, that is wanting to them; without which nothing in the world will solidly content and comfort them. Did you know yourselves in all your griefs, it is there that you would suspect and find your malady, and there that you would most sollicitously seek the cure.

By this time, if you are willing, you may see where lieth the disease and misery of the world, and also what must be the cure. Man hath lost himself, by seeking himself; he hath lost himself in the loss of God: he departed from God, that he might enjoy himself; and so is estranged from God and himself. He left the sun, and retired into darkness, that he might behold himself, and not the light: and now beholdeth neither himself nor the light; for he cannot behold himself but by the light. As if the body should forsake the soul, and say, I will no longer serve another, but will be my own. What would such a selfish separation procure, but the converting of a body into a loathsome carcass, and a senseless clod? Thus hath the soul dejected itself, by turning to itself, and separating from God; without whom it hath neither life, nor light, nor joy. By desiring a selfish kind of knowledge of

good and evil, withdrawing from its just dependence upon God, it hath involved itself in care and misery, and lost the quieting, delighting knowledge which it had in God. And now poor man is lost in error : he is straggled so far from home, that he knoweth not where he is, nor which way to return, till Christ in mercy seek and save him.

Yet could we but get men to know that they do not know themselves, there were the greater hope of their recovery. But this is contrary to the nature of their distemper. An eye that is blinded by a suffusion or cataract, seeth not the thing that blindeth it : it is the same light that must show them themselves, and their ignorance of themselves. Their self-ignorance is part of the evil which they have to know. Those troubled souls that complain that they know not themselves, do show that they begin at least to know themselves. But a Pharisee will say, "Are we blind also?" They are too blind to know that they are blind. The Gospel shall be rejected, the apostles persecuted, Christ himself abused and put to death, the nation ruined, themselves and their posterity undone, by the blindness of these hypocrites, before they will perceive that they are blind, and that they know not God or themselves. Alas ! the long calamities of the church, the distempers and confusions in the state, the lamentable divisions and dissensions among believers, have told the world, how little most men know themselves ; and yet they themselves will not perceive it. They tell it aloud to all about them, by their self-conceitedness and cruelty, uncharitable censures, reproaches, and impositions, that they know not them-

selves, and yet you cannot make them know it. Their afflicted brethren feel it to their smart; the suffering, grieved churches feel it; thousands groan under it, that never wronged them; and yet you cannot make them feel it.

Did they well know themselves to be men, so many would not use themselves like beasts, and care so little for their most noble part. Did they know themselves aright to be but men, so many would not set up themselves as gods; they would not arrogate a divine authority in the matters of God, and the consciences of others, as the Roman prelates do: nor would they desire so much that the observation, reverence, admiration, love, and applause, of all that should be turned upon them; nor be so impatient when they seem to be neglected; nor make so great a matter of their wrongs, as if it were some deity that were injured.

O what a change it would make in the world, if men were brought to the knowledge of themselves! How many would weep, that now laugh, and live in mirth and pleasure! How many would lament their sin and misery, that now are pharisaically confident of their integrity! How many would seek to faithful ministers for advice, and inquire what they should do to be saved, that now deride them, and scorn their counsel, and cannot bear their plain reproof, or come not near them! How many would ask directions for the cure of their unbelief, and pride, and sensuality, that now take little notice of any such sins within them! How many would cry day and night for mercy, and beg importunately for the life of their immortal souls, that now take up

with a few words of course, instead of serious, fervent prayer ! Do but once know yourselves aright, know what you are, and what you have done, what you want, and what is your danger; and then be prayerless and careless if you can; then sit still and trifle out your time, and make a jest of holy diligence, and put God off with lifeless words and compliments if you can. Men could not think so lightly and contemptuously of Christ, so unworthily and falsely of a holy life, so delightfully of sin, so carelessly of duty, so fearlessly of hell, so senselessly and atheistically of God, and so disregardfully of heaven as they now do, if they did but thoroughly know themselves.

And now, sirs, methinks your consciences should begin to stir, and your thoughts should be turned inwards upon yourselves, and you should seriously consider what measure of acquaintance you have at home, and what you have done to procure and maintain such acquaintance. Hath conscience no use to make of this doctrine, and of all that hath been said upon it? Doth it not reprove you for your self-neglect, and your wanderings of mind, and your alien, unnecessary fruitless cogitations? Had you been but as strange to your familiar friend, and as regardless of his acquaintance, correspondence, and affairs, as too many of you have been of your own, you may imagine how he would have taken it, and what use he would have made of it: some such use it becometh you to make of estrangedness to yourselves. Would not he ask, “What is the matter that my friend so seldom looketh at me; and no more mindeth me or my affairs? What have I done to him?

How have I deserved this? What more beloved company or employment hath he got?" You have this and much more to plead against your great neglect and ignorance of yourselves.

CHAPTER IV.

Motives to Self-Acquaintance.

IN order to your conviction and reformation, I shall first show you some of those reasons, that should move you to know yourselves, and consequently should humble you for neglecting it: and then I shall show you what are the hinderances that keep men from self-acquaintance, and give you some directions necessary to attain it.

In general consider, it is by the light of knowledge that all the affairs of your souls must be directed: and therefore, while you know not yourselves, you are in the dark, and unfit to manage your own affairs. Your principal error about yourselves will influence all the transactions of your lives; you will neglect the greatest duties, and abuse and corrupt those which you think you do perform. While you know not yourselves, you know not what you do, nor what you have to do, and therefore can do nothing well. For instance,

1. When you should repent of sin, you know it not as in yourselves, and therefore cannot savingly repent of it. If you know in general that you are sinners, or know your gross and crying sins, which

conscience cannot overlook, yet the sins which you know not, because you will not know them, may condemn you. How can you repent of your pride, hypocrisy, self-love, self-seeking, your want of love, and fear, and trust in God, or any such sins, which you never did observe? Or if you perceive some sins, yet if you perceive not that they reign and are predominant, and that you are in a state of sin, how can you repent of that state which you perceive not? Or if you have but a slight and superficial sight of your sinful state and your particular sins, you can have but a superficial, false repentance.

2. If you know not yourselves, you cannot be duly sensible of your misery. Could it be expected that the Pharisees should lament, that they were of their father the devil, as long as they boasted that they were the children of God? Will they lament that they are under the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and the bondage of the devil, that know not of any such misery that they are in, but hope they are the heirs of heaven? What think you is the reason, that when Scripture telleth us that few shall be saved, and none at all but those that are new creatures, and have the Spirit of Christ, that yet there is not one of many that is sensible that the case is theirs? Though Scripture peremptorily concludeth, "That they that are in the flesh cannot please God," and that "to be carnally minded is death," and that "without holiness none shall see God," and that all "they shall be damned that believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness," and that "Christ will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God,

and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." And would not a man think that such words as these should waken the guilty soul that believes them; and make us all to look about us? I confess it is no wonder, if a flat atheist or infidel should slight them and deride them. But is it not wonder if they stir not those, that profess to believe the word of God, and are the men of whom these Scriptures speak? And yet among a thousand that are thus condemned already; (I say, by the word, that is the rule of judgment, even condemned already; for so God saith, John iii. 18.) how few shall you see, that with penitent tears lament their misery! How few shall you hear, with true remorse, complain of their spiritual distress, and cry out as those that were pricked at the heart, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" How few hearts are affected with so miserable a case! Do you see by the tears, or hear by the complaints, of those about you, that they know what it is, to be unpardoned sinners, under the wrath of the most holy God? And what is the matter that there is no more such lamentation? Is it because there are few or none so miserable? Alas! no: the Scripture, and their worldly, fleshly, and ungodly lives, assure us of the contrary. But it is because men are strangers to themselves: they little think that it is themselves, that all the terrible threatenings of God do mean. Most of them little believe or con-

sider what Scripture saith; but fewer consider what conscience hath to say within, when once it is awakened, and the curtain is drawn back, and the light appeareth. Did all that read and hear the Scriptures know themselves, I will tell you how they would hear and read it. When the Scriptures saith, "To be carnally minded is death;" and "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die;" the guilty man would say, I am carnally minded: and I live after the flesh: therefore I must turn or die. When Scripture saith, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also;" the guilty conscience would assume, my heart is not in heaven, therefore my treasure is not there. When Scripture saith, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," and "Except a man be regenerate and born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" and "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new;" and "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;"—the guilty man would assume, I was never thus converted, regenerate, born again, and made a new creature: I have not the Spirit of Christ: therefore I am none of his, and cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, till this change be wrought upon me. When the Scripture saith, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge;"—the guilty man would say, How then shall I be able to stand before him?

Yea, did but men know themselves, they would perceive their danger from remoter principles, that

mention the dealing of God with others. When they hear of the judgment of God upon the ungodly, and the enemies of the church, they would say, "Except I repent, I shall likewise perish." When they hear that "judgment must begin at the house of God," they would infer, "What shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" And when they hear that "the righteous are scarcely saved," they would think, "Where then shall the ungodly and sinner appear?"

3. If you know not yourselves, you cannot be Christians: you cannot have a practical belief in Christ; for he is offered to you in the Gospel, as the remedy for your misery; as the ransom for your enthralled souls; as the propitiation for your sin, and your peace-maker with the Father; without whose merit, satisfaction, righteousness, and intercession, your guilty souls can have no hope. And can you savingly value him in these respects, if you know not that sin and misery, that guilt and thralldom, in which your need of Christ consisteth? Christ is esteemed by you according to the judgment you pass upon yourselves.

They that say they are sinners, from a general brain-knowledge, will accordingly say, Christ is their Saviour and their hope, with a superficial belief; and will honour him with their lips, with all the titles belonging to the Redeemer of the world; but they that feel that they are deadly sick of sin at the very heart, and are lost for ever if he do not save them, will feel what the name of a Saviour signifieth; and will look to him, as the Israelites to the brazen serpent, and will yield up themselves to be saved by

him, in his way. An ineffectual knowledge of yourselves, may make you believe in a Redeemer, as all the city do of a learned, able physician, that will speak well of his skill, and resolve to use him when necessity constraineth them; but at present they find no such necessity. But an effectual sight and sense of your condition, will bring you to Christ; as a man in a dropsy or consumption comes to the physician, that feels he must have help, or die. Saith Bernard, "You will not take the Son of God for a Saviour, if you be not affrighted by his threatenings." And if you perceive not that you are lost, you will not heartily thank him that came to seek and save you. Will you seek to him to fetch you from the gates of hell, that find not that you are there?

But to the self-condemning soul, that knoweth itself, how welcome would a Saviour be! How ready is such a soul for Christ! Thou that judgest thyself, art the person that must come to Christ to justify thee. Now thou art ready to be healed by him, when thou findest that thou art sick, and dead. Hast thou received the sentence of death in thyself? Come to him now, and thou shalt have life. Art thou weary and heavy laden? Come to him for rest: come, and fear not; for he bids thee come. Dost thou know, that "thou hast sinned against heaven and before God, and art not worthy to be called a son?" Do but cast thyself, then, at his feet, and tell him so, and ask forgiveness; and try whether he will not welcome and embrace thee, pardon and entertain thee, clothe thee and feast thee, and rejoice over thee, as one that "was lost and is found; was dead and is alive." For, "he came to seek and to save that which was lost." While thou saidst,

“ I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:” thou wouldst not “ buy the tried gold that thou mightest be rich; nor his white raiment that thou mightest be clothed, that the shame of thy nakedness might not appear; nor Christ’s eye-salve, that thou mightest see.” But now thou art poor in spirit; and findest that thou art nothing, and hast nothing, and of thyself canst do nothing, that is acceptably good; and that of thyself thou art insufficient to think any thing that is good; now thou art readier for the help of Christ, and a patient fit for the tender healing hand of the physician. Whilst thou saidst, “ God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, nor as this publican,” thou wast farther from Christ and justification, than now that thou standest as afar off, and darest scarcely look up to heaven, but smitest on thy breast, and sayest, “ Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.” Not that extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or any that are ungodly, are justified, or can be saved, while they are such: not that a smiting on the breast, with a “ Lord be merciful to me a sinner,” will serve their turn, while they continue in their wicked lives; but when thou art brought to accuse and condemn thyself, thou art prepared for his grace that must renew and justify thee. None sped better with Christ, than the woman that confessed herself a dog, and begged but for the children’s crumbs; and the centurion that sent friends to Christ, to mediate for him, as being unworthy to come himself, and unworthy that Christ should come under his roof. For, of the first, Christ said, “ O

woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt;" and of the second, he saith, with admiration, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Though thou art ready to deny the title of a child, and to number thyself with the dogs, yet go to him, and beg his crumbs of mercy. Though thou think that Christ will not come to such a one as thou, and though thou beg prayers of others, as thinking he will not hear thy own, thou little thinkest, how this self-abasement and self-denial prepareth thee for his tenderest mercies, and his esteem. When thou art contrite (as the dust that is trodden under feet), and poor, and tremblest at the word, then will he look at thee with compassion and respect. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place: with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones: for I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made." When thou art using the self-condemning words of Paul, "I am carnal, sold under sin: what I would, that I do not; and what I hate, that do I. For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing—I find a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me——. A law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin——," when thou criest out with him, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death;" thou art then fitter to look to thy Redeemer, and use the

following words, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." When thou didst exalt thyself, thou wast obnoxious to the storms of justice, which was engaged to bring thee low : but now thou humblest thyself, thou liest in the way of mercy, that is engaged to exalt thee. Mercy looketh downward, and can quickly spy a sinner in the dust ; but cannot leave him there, nor deny him compassion and relief. Art thou cast out as helpless, wounded by thy sin, and neglected by all others that pass by ? Thou art the fittest object for the skill and mercy of Him that washeth sinners in his blood, and tenderly bindeth up their wounds, and undertakes the perfecting of the cure, though yet thou must bear the surgeon's hand, till his time of perfect cure be come. Now thou perceivest the greatness of thy sin and misery, thou art fit to study the greatness of his mercy ; and with all saints (to strive) "to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Now thou hast "smitten upon the thigh," and said, "What have I done ?" thou art fitter to look upon him that was wounded and smitten for thy transgressions, and to consider what he hath done, and suffered : how he "hath borne thy grief and carried thy sorrows, and was bruised for thy iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and we are healed by his stripes : all we like sheep have gone astray : we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Art thou in doubt whether there be any forgiveness for thy sins ; and whether there be any place for repentance ? Remember that Christ is

“exalted by God’s right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” And that he himself hath spoken it, that “all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, except the blasphemy against the Spirit.” And this forgiveness of sins thou art bound to believe as an article of thy creed: that it is purchased by Christ, and freely offered in the Gospel. Mercy did but wait all this while, till thou wast brought to understand the want and worth of it, that it might be thine. When a Peter, that denieth Christ with oaths and cursing, goeth out and weepeth, he speedily finds mercy from him without, that he but now denied within. When so bloody a persecutor as Paul findeth mercy, upon his prostration and confession; and when so great an offender as Manasseh is forgiven upon his penitence, in bonds; when all his witchcraft, idolatry, and cruelties are pardoned, upon a repentance that might seem to have been forced by a grievous scourge; what sinner, that perceives his sin and misery, can question his entertainment if he come to Christ. Come to him, sinner, with thy load and burden; come to him with all thy acknowledged unworthiness: and try whether he will refuse thee. He hath professed that “him that cometh to him he will in nowise cast out.” He refused not his very murderers, when they were pricked at the heart, and inquired after a remedy; and will he refuse thee? Hath our Physician poured out his blood to make a medicine for distracted sinners; and now is he unwilling to work the cure? O sinner! now thou art brought to know thyself, know Christ also, and the cure is done. Let

thy thoughts of the remedy be deeper, and larger, and longer, than all thy thoughts of thy misery: it is thy sin and shame if it be not so. Why wilt thou have twenty thoughts of sin and misery, for one that thou hast of Christ and merey? when merey is so large, and great, and wonderful as to triumph over misery: and grace aboundeth much more where sin hath abounded. Saith Augustine, "Behold the wounds of Christ as he is hanging; the blood of him dying, the price of him redeeming, the sears of him rising. His head is bowed to kiss thee; his heart open to love thee; his arms open to embrace thee; his whole body exposed to redeem thee."

Saith Augustine, "The Maker of man was made man; that he might suck the breasts that rules the stars; that bread might hunger; the spring (or fountain) might thirst; the light might sleep; the way might be weary in his journey; that the truth might be hidden by false witnesses; that the Judge of quick and dead might be judged by a mortal judge: justice might be condemned by the unjust; discipline might be scourged; the cluster of grapes might be crowned with thorns; the foundation might be hanged on a tree; that strength might be weakened; that health might be wounded; and that life itself might die." This is the wonderful mystery of love, which will entertain the soul that comes to Christ, and which thou must study to know when thou knowest thyself. But till then all these will be riddles to thee, or little relished: and Christ will seem, to thy neglecting heart, to have died and done all this in vain.

And hence it is, that as proud, ungodly, sensual men, were never sound believers, so they oftentimes fall from that opinionative common faith which they had, and of all men do most easily turn apostates : it being just with God, that they should be so far forsaken as to vilify the remedy, that would not know their sin and misery, but love it, and pertinaciously hold it, as their felicity !

4. If you know not yourselves, you will not know what to do with yourselves, nor to what end, and for what work you are to live. This makes the holy work neglected, and most men live to little purpose, wasting their days in matters that themselves will call impertinent, when they come to die ; as if they were good for nothing else : whereas, if they knew themselves, they would know that they are made and fitted for more noble works. O man, if thou wert acquainted well with thy faculties and frame, thou wouldst perceive the name of God thy Maker, to be so deeply engraven in thy nature, even in all thy parts and powers, as should convince thee that thou wast made for him ; that all thou art, and all thou hast, is nothing worth, but for his service : as all the parts and motions of a clock, or watch, are but to tell the hour of the day. Thou wouldst know then the meaning of sanctification and holiness ; that it signifieth but the giving God his own, and is the first part of justice, without which no rendering men their due can prove thee just. Thou wouldst then know the unreasonableness and injustice of ungodliness and all sin : and that to serve thy fleshly lusts and pleasures, with those noble faculties, that were purposely formed to love and serve the eternal God, is

absurd and villanous. O man, didst thou but know thyself, and for what employment thy faculties are made, thou wouldst lift up thy head, and seriously think, who holds the reins? who keeps the breath yet in thy nostrils, and continueth thee in life? and where it is that thou must shortly fix thy unchangeable abode; and what is now to be done in preparation for such a day? Thou wouldst know that thy higher faculties were not made to serve the lower: thy reason to serve thy sensual delights. O man! hadst thou not lost the knowledge of thyself, thou wouldst be so far from wondering at a holy life, that thou wouldst look upon an unholy person as a monster.

I confess, my soul is too apt to lose its lively sense of all these things; but whenever it is awake, I am forced to say, in these kind of meditations, If I had not a God, to know and think on, to love and honour, to seek and serve, what had I to do with my understanding, will, and all my powers? What should I do with life and time? What use should I make of God's provisions? What could I find to do in the world, that is worthy of a man? Were it not as good to lie still, and sleep out my days, and professedly do nothing, as to go dreaming, with a seeming seriousness, and wander about the world as in my sleep, and do nothing with such a troublesome stir, as sensual, worldly persons do? Could not I have lived as a beast, without a reasonable, free-working soul? Let them turn from God, and neglect the conduct of the Redeemer, and disregard the holy approaches, and breathings, and workings of the soul towards its beloved centre and felicity,

that know not what an immortal soul is, or know how else to employ their faculties, with satisfaction or content to themselves. I profess here, as in his presence, that is the Father of spirits, and before angels and men, I do not, I know not, what else to do with my soul that is worth the doing, but what is subservient to its proper object, its end and everlasting rest. If the holy service of God, and the preparation for heaven, and seeking after Christ and happiness, be forbidden me, I have no more to do in the world, that will satisfy my reason, or satisfy my affections, or that, as a man or a Christian, I can own. And it is as good not to live, as to be deprived of the uses and ends of life. Though my love and desires are infinitely below the Eternal goodness, and glory, which they should prosecute and embrace, yet do my little tastes and dull desires, and cold affections consent, unfeignedly, to say, Let me have God or nothing: let me know him and his will, and what will please him, and how I may enjoy him: or, O that I never had an understanding to know any thing! Let me remember him; or, O that I had never had a memory! Let me love him, and be beloved of him; or, O that I never had such a thing as love within me! Let me hear his teachings, or have no ears; let me serve him with my riches, or let me have none; and with any interest or honour, or let me be despised. It is nothing that he gives not being to; and it is useless that is not for his glory and his will. If God have nothing to do with me, I have nothing to do with myself, and the world hath nothing to do with me.

Let dark and dreaming sinners declare their

shame, and speak evil of what they never knew, and neglect the good they never saw; let them that know not themselves or God, refuse to give up themselves to God, and think a life of sensuality more suitable to them. But "Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance on me," and let me no longer be a man, nor have reason, or any of thy talents in my trust, if I shall not be thine, and live to thee. I say as Bernard, "Worthy is that man, O Christ, to die, that refuseth to live to thee: and he that is not wise to thee, is but a fool; and he that ear-eth to *be*, unless it be for thee, is good for nothing, and is nothing. For thyself, O God, hast thou made all things; and he that would be to himself, and not to thee, among all things, beginneth to be nothing."

5. If you know not yourselves, you know not how to apply the word of God, which you read or hear; you know not how to use either promises or threatenings, to the benefit of your souls: nay, you will misapply them to your hurt. If you are unregenerate, and know it not, you will put by all the calls of God, that invite you to come and be converted, and think that they belong to grosser sinners, but not to you. All the descriptions of the unsanctified and their misery, will little affect you; and all God's threatenings to such will little move you; for you will think they are not meant of you; you will be pharisaically blessing yourselves, when you should be pricked at the heart, and laid in contrition at the feet of Christ: you will be thanking God that you are not such as indeed you are; you will be making application of the threatenings to others, and pitying them when you should lament yourselves;

you will be thundering when you should be trembling; and speaking that evil of others that is your own; and convincing others of that which you had need to be convinced of; and wakening others by talking in your sleep; and calling other men hypocrites, proud, self-conceited, ignorant, and other such names that are indeed your own; you will read or hear your own condemnation, and not be moved at it, as not knowing your own description when you hear it, but thinking that this thunderbolt is levelled at another sort of men. All the words of peace and comfort, you will think are meant of such as you. When you read of pardon, reconciliation, adoption, and right to everlasting life, you will imagine that all these are yours. And thus you will be dreaming that you are rich and safe, when you are poor and miserable, and in the greatest peril. And is it not pity that the celestial, undeceiving light, should be abused to so dangerous self-deceit? And that truth itself should be made the furtherance of so great an error? And that the eye-salve should more put out your eyes? Is it not sad to consider, that you should now be emboldened to presumption, by that very word which (unless you be converted) will judge you to damnation? And that self-deceit should be increased by the glass of verity that should undeceive you?

6. If you know not yourselves, you know not how to confess or pray. This makes men confess their sins so seldom, and with so little remorse to God and man; you hide them because they are hidden from yourselves; and therefore God will open them to your shame: whereas, if they were opened to you,

they would be opened by you, and covered by God. Saith Augustine, "I did not cover, but open that thou mayest cover: I concealed not, that thou mightest hide. For when man discloseth, God covereth: when man hideth, God maketh bare: when man confesseth, God forgiveth." For want of self-acquaintance it is that men hypocritically confess to God in way of custom, the sins which they will deny or excuse to man; and will tell God formally of much, which they cannot endure to be told of seriously by a reprovcr: or, if they confess it generally with a seeming humility to others, they cannot bear that another should faithfully charge it upon them, in order to their true humiliation and amendment. Saith Bernard, "It is the sign of true confession, if, as every one saith he is a sinner, he contradict not another that saith it of him. For he desireth not to seem a sinner, but righteous, when one confesseth himself a sinner, when none reproveth him. It is the vice of pride, for a man to disdain to have that spoken to him of others, which he stuck not to confess of his own accord concerning himself."

And for prayer, it is men's ignorance of themselves that makes prayer so little in request: hunger best teacheth men to beg. You would be oftener on your knees, if you were oftener in your hearts. Prayer would not seem needless, if you knew your needs. Know yourselves, and be prayerless if you can. When the prodigal was convinced, he presently purposeth to confess and pray. When Paul was converted, Ananias hath this evidence of it from God, "Behold he prayeth." Indeed the inward part of prayer, is the motion of a returning soul to

God. Saith Hugo, "Prayer is the turning of a pious, humble soul to God, leaning upon faith, hope, and love. It is the relief of the petitioner, the sacrifice of God, the scourge of devils."

And self-knowledge would teach men how to pray. Your own hearts would be the best prayer-books to you, if you were skilful in reading them. Did you see what sin is, and in what relation you stand to God, to heaven and hell, it would drive you above your beads and lifeless words of course, and make you know, that to pray to God for pardon and salvation, is not the work for a sleepy soul. Saith Gregory, "He offereth the truest prayer to God, that knoweth himself, that humbly seeth he is but dust, and ascribeth not virtue to himself," &c. Nothing quencheth prayer more than to be mistaken or mindless about ourselves. When we go from home this fire goes out; but when we return, and search our hearts, and see the sins, the wants, the weaknesses, that are there, and perceive the danger that is before us, and withal the glorious hopes that are offered us, here is fuel to inflame the soul, and cure it of its drowsiness and dumbness. Help any sinner to a clearer light, to see into his heart and life, and to a livelier sense of his own condition, and I warrant you he will be more disposed to fervent prayer, and will better understand the meaning of those words, "That men ought always to pray and not to faint;" and "pray without ceasing." You may hear some impious persons now disputing against frequent and fervent prayer, and saying, "What need all this ado?" But if you were able to open these men's eyes, and show them what is

within them and before them, you would quickly answer all their arguments, and convince them better than words can do, and put an end to the dispute. You would set all the prayerless families in town and country, gentlemen's and poor men's, on fervent calling upon God, if you could but help them to such a sight of their sin and danger, as shortly the stoutest of them must have. Why do they pray, and call for prayers, when they come to die, but that they begin a little better to know themselves? They see then that youth, and health, and honour, are not the things, nor make them so happy, as deceiving prosperity once persuaded them. Did they believe and consider what God saith of them, and not what flattery and self-love say, it would open the mouths of them that are most speechless. But those that are born deaf are always dumb. How can they speak that language with desire to God, which they never learned by faith from God, or by knowledge of themselves?

And self-knowledge would teach men what to ask. They would feel most need of spiritual mercies, and beg hardest for them; and for outward things, they would ask but for their daily bread, and not be foolishly importunate with God for that which they know not to be suitable or good for them. "It is mercy to be denied sometimes when we pray for outward things: our physician, and not we, must choose our physic, and prescribe our diet." And if men knew themselves, it would teach them on what terms to expect the hearing of their prayers. Neither to be accepted for their merits, nor yet to be accepted without that faith, and repentance and

desire; that seriousness, humility, and sincerity of heart, which the very nature of prayer to God doth contain or pre-suppose. “He that nameth the name of Christ, must depart from iniquity,” and must “wash himself and make him clean, and put away the evil of his doings from before the eyes of God, and cease to do evil, and learn to do well.” As knowing that though a Simon Magus must repent and pray, and the “wicked, in forsaking his way, and thoughts, and returning to the Lord, must seek him while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near;” and the prayers of an humble publican are heard, when he sets his prayer against his sins: yet if he would cherish his sin by prayer, and flatter himself into a presumption and security in a wicked life, because he useth to ask God forgiveness: if he thus “regard iniquity in his heart, God will not hear his prayers;” and “we know that such impenitent sinners God heareth not.” And thus the prayers of the wicked, as wicked, (which are not a withdrawing from his wickedness, but a bolster of his security, and as a craving of protection and leave to sin) are but “an abomination to the Lord.” The bullet, the thorn must be first got out, before any medicine can heal their wounds. Did men know themselves, and who they have to do with in their prayers, they would not go from cards, and dice, and gluttony, and fornication, and railing, lying, or reviling at the servants of the Lord, to a few hypocritical words of prayer, to salve all till the next time, as if one sin had procured the forgiveness of another. Nor would they shut up a day of worldliness, ambition, sensuality, or profaneness, with a few heartless words

of confession and supplication; or with the words of penitence, while their hearts are impenitent; as if, when they have abused God by sin, they would make him amends, or reconcile him by their mockery. Nor would they think to be accepted by praying for that which they would not have; for holiness, when they hate it, and for deliverance from the sins which they would not be delivered from, and would not have their prayers granted.

7. If you know not yourselves, it will unfit you for thanksgiving: your greatest mercies will be least esteemed; and the lesser will be misesteemed. And while you are unthankful for what you have, you will be absurdly thanking God for that which indeed you have not. What inestimable mercies are daily trodden under feet by sinners, that know not their worth, because they know not their own necessities! They have time to repent, and make preparation for an endless life: but they know not the worth of it, but unthankfully neglect it, and cast it away on the basest vanities: as if worldly cares, or wicked company, or fleshly lusts, or cards, or dice, or revelings, or idleness, were exercises in which they might better improve it, than the works of holiness, justice, and mercy, which God hath made the business of their lives: or, as if the profits, and pleasures, and vainglory of this world, did better deserve it than their Creator, and their own souls, and the heavenly inheritance. But if their eyes were opened to see where they stand, and what they are, and what are their dangers and necessities, how thankful would they be for one year, one month, one day, one hour, to repent and cry to God for mercy! And

how sensibly would they perceive that a hundred years' time is not too long to spend in serious preparation for eternity !

They have now the faithful ministers of Christ, inviting them in his name to come to him and receive the riches of his grace, and " beseeching them, in his stead, to be reconciled unto God." But they stop their ears, and harden their hearts, and stiffen their necks, and love not to be disturbed in their sins, but are angry with those that are solicitous for their salvation, and revile them as too precise and strict, that tell them of the " one thing needful," and persuade them to choose the better part, and tell them where their sin will leave them. They take them for their friends that will encourage them in the way that God condemneth, and be merry with them in the way to endless sorrow, and flatter them into security and impenitency till the time of grace be past ; but they hate them as their enemies that faithfully reprove them, and tell them of their folly, and call them to a safer, better way. Alas, sirs, there would not be so many nations, congregations, and souls now left in darkness and misery by their own doing, having driven away the mercy of the Gospel, and thrust their faithful teachers from them, if they knew themselves. Men would not triumph in their own calamity, when they have expelled their faithful teachers, (the dust of whose feet, the sweet of whose brows, the tears of whose eyes, and the fervent prayers and groans of whose hearts must witness against them,) if they knew themselves. They would not be like a madman that glorieth that he hath beaten away his physician and his friends, and

is left to himself, if they knew themselves. When they have the earnest calls of the Word without, and convictions and urgings of the Spirit of God, and their consciences within, they would not wilfully go on, and cast these mercies at their heels, if they knew themselves.

They have leave to join in the communion of saints, and to enjoy the benefit of holy society in prayer, and conference, and mutual love and spiritual assistance, and in the public worship of God: but they pass these by, as having more of trouble and burden than of mercy, because they little know themselves.

And their inferior mercies of health, and wealth, and food, and raiment, and friends, and accommodations, they misesteem and misuse; and value them but as provision for the flesh, and the satisfaction of their sensual and inordinate desires, and not as necessary provision for their duty in the way to heaven! And therefore, they are most thankful for their greatest snares: for that honour and abundance which are stronger temptations than they can overcome: for those fleshly contentments and delights, which are the enemies of grace, and the prison of their noblest faculties, and the undoing of their souls. If they could for shame speak out, they would thank God more for sensual pleasures, or riches, or preferment, or lands, or houses, than ever they did for all the offers of Christ and grace, and all the invitations to a holy life. For there is much more joy and pleasure in their hearts in the former than in the latter.

And self-ignorance will also corrupt your thanks-

giving, and turn it into sin and folly. Is it not shame and pity to hear an unpaſſioned enemy of holineſs, and of God, to thank God that he is juſtified and reconciled to God, and adopted to be his child, and made a member of Jeſus Chriſt? And to hear a carnal, unregenerate perſon give thanks for his regeneration and ſanctification by the Holy Ghhoſt? As it is to hear a leper give thanks for perfect health, or a fool or madman thank God for making him wiſer than his neighbours? Is it not pity to hear a miſerable ſoul thank God for the grace which he never had? and one that is near eternal miſery to thank God for making him an heir of glory? O how many have thanked God phariſaically for the pardon of their ſins, that muſt for ever ſuffer for thoſe ſins! How many have thanked him for giving them the aſſured hopes of glory, that muſt be thruſt out into endless miſery! As I have known many, that by their friends and by themſelves have been flattered into confident hopes of life, when they were ready to die, have thanked God that they were pretty well, and the worſt was paſt; which, in the eyes of judicious ſtanders-by, was not the leaſt aggravation of their ſad and deplorable ſtate. Methinks it is one of the ſaddeſt ſpectacles in the world to hear a man thanking God for the aſſurance of ſalvation, that is in a ſtate of condemnation; and likely to be in hell for ever! Theſe abſurdities could not corrupt your higheſt duties, and turn them into ſin, if you knew yourſelves.

A man that knoweth his own neceſſities and unworthineſs; is thankful for a little to God and man. Mercy is as no mercy, where there is no ſenſe of

need or misery. Therefore, God useth to humble them so low in the work of conversion, whom he meaneth ever after to employ in the magnifying of his grace. And then that which is folly and hypocrisy from a Pharisee, will be an acceptable sacrifice from an humble, grateful soul; and he that by grace is differenced from other men, may (modestly) thank God that he is not as other men. For had he nothing more to thank God for, than the ungodly world, he would be rejected and perish with the world: and if he have more than the world, and yet be no more thankful than the world, he would be guilty of greater unthankfulness than the world. Saith Augustine, "This is not the pride of one lift up, but the acknowledgment of one that is not unthankful. Know that thou hast, and know that thou hast nothing of thyself, that thou mayest neither be proud, nor yet unthankful. Say to thy God, I am holy, for thou hast sanctified me: for I have received what I had not; and thou hast given me what I deserved not." The thanksgiving of a faithful soul is so far from being displeasing to God as a pharisaical ostentation, that it is a great and excellent duty, and a most sweet and acceptable sacrifice. "Offer unto God thanksgiving—He that offereth praise glorifieth me."

8. And as to the Lord's Supper, what work they are there like to make that are unacquainted with themselves, you may conjecture from the nature of the work, and the command of self-examination and self-judging. Though some may be welcomed by Christ, that have faith and love, though they doubt of their sincerity, and know not themselves to be

children of God ; yet none can be welcome that know not themselves to be sinners condemned by the law, and needing a Saviour to reconcile and justify them. Who will be there humbled, and thankful for a Redeemer, and hunger and thirst for sacramental benefits, that knoweth not his own unworthiness and necessities ? O what inestimable mercy would appear in a sacrament to us, in the offers of Christ and saving grace, and communion with God and with his saints, if our appetites were but quickened by the knowledge of ourselves !

9. And I beseech you consider, whether all your studies, and learning, and employments, be not irrational, preposterous, and impertinent, while you study not first to know yourselves ? You are nearest to yourselves, and therefore should be best acquainted with yourselves. What should you more observe than the case of your own souls ? and what should you know better than what is within you, and that which methinks you should always feel,—even the bent of your own estimations and affections, the sicknesses of your souls, your guilt, your wants, and greatest necessities ? All your learning is but the concomitant of your dotage, till you know yourselves. Your wisest studies are but the workings of a distracted mind, while you study not yourselves, and the things of everlasting consequence. To study whether it be the sun or earth that moveth, and not consider what motion is predominant in thy soul and life, is a pitiful, preposterous study : to think more what stars are in the firmament, than what grace is in thy heart ; and what planet reigneth, than what disposition reigneth in thyself ; and whether the Spi-

rit or the flesh have the dominion, is but to be learnedly beside thyself.

Is it not a laborious madness to travel into far countries, and compass sea and land, to satisfy a curiosity; and to be at so much cost and pains to know the situation, government, and manners, of the cities and countries of the world, and in the meantime to be utterly strange at home, and never bestow one day or hour in a serious survey of heart and life? To carry about a dark, unknown, neglected soul, while they are travelling to know remotest things that less concern them? Methinks it is a pitiful thing, to hear men ingeniously discoursing of the quality, laws, and customs of other nations, and to be mute when they should express their acquaintance with themselves, either in confession and prayer to God, or in any humble, experimental conference with men. To keep correspondence with persons of all degrees, and to have no correspondence with themselves. To keep their shop-books and accounts with diligence, and never regard the book of conscience, nor keep account of that for which they must ere long be accountable to God. It is a pitiful thing to see men turn over voluminous histories, to know what hath been done from the beginning of the world, and regard no more the history of their own lives, nor once look back with penitent remorse upon their ungodly, careless conversations, nor say, ‘What have we done?’ To see men have well-furnished libraries, and read over a multitude of books, and never read the state and record of their souls!

It maketh you but objects of wonder and compassion, to read laws and records, and understand all

cases, and never endeavour to understand the case of your immortal souls ! To counsel others for their temporal estates, and never understand your own spiritual state ! To study the mysteries of nature, and search into all the works of God, except yourselves, and that which your happiness or misery depends on ! To study the nature, and causes, and signs of bodily diseases, and their several remedies, and never study the diseases of your own souls, nor the precious remedy which mercy hath provided you ! To cure the sicknesses of other men's bodies, and never feel a stony, proud, or sensual heart ! To know the matters of all arts and sciences, to be able to discourse of them all to the admiration of the hearers, is but an aggravation of thy lamentable folly, if thou be all this while a stranger to thyself, and that because thou art mindless of thy soul's condition ! It is more necessary to know yourselves, your sin, your duty, your hopes, your dangers, than to know how to eat, or drink, or clothe yourselves. Alas ! it is a pitiful kind of knowledge, that will not keep you out of hell ; and a foolish wisdom, that teaches you not to save your souls ! Till you know yourselves, the rest of your knowledge is but a confused dream. Self-knowledge will direct you in all your studies, and still employ you on that which is necessary, and will do you good, when others are studying but unprofitable, impertinent things ; and indeed are but “ proud, knowing nothing, (when they seem to excel in knowledge,) but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, that

take gain for godliness." Self-knowledge will help you in all your studies. "You will know in what order, with what study, and to what end every thing should be known. In what order, that that may go first, that most promoteth our salvation: to what end, that it be not for vainglory and ostentation, but for your own and other men's salvation."—*Bernard*.

And as it is ourselves and our own affairs that are nearest to us, and therefore first in order to be known; so it is ourselves that we have a special charge of, and that we are most obliged to study and to know; and it is our own condition and soul affairs that most concern us. Though sun, and moon, and earth, be not little things in themselves; yet the knowledge of them is a small, inconsiderable matter to thee, in comparison of the knowledge of thyself. The words even of Seneca are so pungent on this subject, that I shall recite some of them, to shame those professed Christians that are so much short of a heathen. "What furtherance to virtue is the enarration of syllables, the diligence of words, the remembering of fables, and the law and modification of verses? What of these taketh away fear, and bridleth concupiscence?—The geometrician teacheth me to measure spacious grounds: let him rather teach me to measure how much is sufficient for a man. Thou canst measure rounds: if thou be an artist, measure the mind of man; tell him how great it is, or how little or low. Thou knowest a straight line: and what the better art thou if thou know not what is right or straight in thy own life?—This diligent study of the liberal arts, doth make men troublesome, unseasonable, wordy, self-pleasing, and

such as therefore learn not things necessary, because they have learned things superfluous."

When our nearer, greater works are done, then those that are more distant will be seasonable, and useful, and excellent in their proper places. When men understand the state and affairs of their souls, and have made sure of their everlasting happiness, they may then seasonably and wisely manage political and economical affairs, and prudently order and prosecute their temporal concerns: when they "first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness," subordinate things may be seasonably considered. But for a man to be taken up about matters of law, or trade, or pleasure, when he mindeth not the matters of his salvation; and to study languages, arts, and sciences, when he studieth not how to escape damnation, is not to be learned, but to dote; nor to be honourably or prudently employed, but to walk as a man in a dream, and live besides the reason of a man, as well as below the faith of a Christian. These seemingly wise and honourable worldlings, that labour not to know what state and relation they stand in to God, and his judgment, do live in a more pernicious distraction than he that is disputing in mood and figure, while his house is burning over his head.

Even works of charity seem but absurd, preposterous acts, in those that are not charitably to themselves. To be careful to feed or clothe the bodies of the poor, and senseless of the nakedness and misery of your own souls, is an irrational, distracted course of mercy: as if a man should be busy to pull a thorn out of another's finger, and senseless of a stab that is given himself in the bowels, or at the

heart. To love yourself, and not your neighbour, is selfish and uncharitable. To love neither your neighbour nor yourself, is inhuman. To love your neighbour and not yourself, is preposterous, irrational, and scarcely possible. But to love first yourself, (next to God,) and then to love your neighbour as yourself, is regular, orderly, Christian charity.

10. Consider also, that the ignorance of yourselves doth much unfit you to be useful to others. If you are magistrates, you will never be soundly faithful against the sin of others, till you have felt how hurtful it is to yourselves. If you are ministers, you will scarcely ever be good at heart-searching work, till you have searched your own; nor will you know the deceitfulness of sin, and the turnings and windings of the crooked serpent, till you have observed them in yourselves; nor will you have due compassion on the ignorant, impenitent, ungodly, unconverted, or on the tempted, weak, disconsolate souls, till you have learned rightly to be affected with sin and misery in yourselves. If men see a magistrate punish offenders, or hear a minister reprove them, that is as bad or worse himself, they will but deride the justice of the one, and reproofs of the other, as the acts or words of blind partiality or hypocrisy, and accost you with a "Physician, heal thyself." The eye of the soul is not like the eye of the body, that can see other things, but not itself. There are two evils that Christ noteth in the reproofs of such as are unacquainted with themselves,—hypocrisy, and unfitness to reprove. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or

how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Thy own vices do corrupt thy judgment, and cause thee to excuse the like in others, and to accuse the virtue that in others is the condemner of thy vice, and to represent all as odious that is done by those that by their piety and reproofs are become odious to thy guilty and malicious soul. Dost thou hate a holy, heavenly life, and art void of the love of God, and of his servants? Hast thou a carnal, dead, unconverted heart? Art thou a presumptuous, careless, worldly wretch? Hast thou these beams in thy own eye? And art thou fit to quarrel with others that are better than thyself, about a ceremony, or a holiday, or a circumstance of church-government or worship, or a doubtful, controverted opinion? And to be pulling these motes out of thy brother's eye—(yea, rather wouldst pull out his eyes, to get out the mote)—first get an illuminated mind, and a renewed, sanctified heart; be acquainted with the love of God, and of his image; and cast out the beam of infidelity, ungodliness, worldliness, sensuality, malice, and hypocrisy, from thine own eye; and then help to cure him of his lesser involuntary errors and infirmities. Till then, the beam of thy sensuality and impiety will make thee a very incompetent judge of the mote of a different opinion in thy brother. Every word that thou speakest in condemnation of thy brother, for his opinion or infirmity, is a double condemnation of thyself for thy ungodly, fleshly life. And if thou

wilt needs have “ judgment to begin at the house of God,” for the failings of his sincere and faithful servants, it may remember thee to thy terror, “ what the end of them shall be that obey not the gospel of God.” And if you will condemn the righteous for their lamented weaknesses, “ Where think you the ungodly and the sinner shall appear ?”

11. If you begin not at yourselves, you can make no progress to a just and edifying knowledge of extrinsic things. Man’s self is the alphabet or primer of his learning. “ In vain doth he lift up his heart to see God, that is yet unfit to see himself. For thou must first know the invisible things of thy own spirit, before thou canst be fit to know the invisible things of God. And if thou canst not know thyself, presume not to know the things that are above thyself.”—*Hugo*. You cannot see the face which it representeth, if you will not look upon the glass which representeth it. God is not visible, but appeareth to us in his creatures; and especially in ourselves. And if we know not ourselves, we cannot know God in ourselves. “ The principal glass for the beholding of God, is the reasonable soul beholding itself.”—*Hugo*.

And you will make but an unhappy progress in your study of the works of God, if you begin not with yourselves. You can know but little of the works of nature, till you know your own nature: and you can know as little of the works of grace, till self-acquaintance help you to know the nature and danger of those diseases that grace must cure. The unhappy error of presumptuous students, about their own hearts, misleadeth and perverteth them in

the whole course of their studies. It is a lamentable sight to see a man turning over fathers and councils, and diligently studying words and notions, that is himself in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, and never knew it, nor studieth the cure. And it is a pitiful thing to see such in a pulpit, teaching the people to know the mysteries of salvation, that know not, nor ever laboured to know, what sins are predominant in their own hearts and lives; or, whether they stand before God in a justified or a condemned state! To hear a poor, unsanctified man, as boldly treating of the mysteries of sanctification, as if he had felt them in himself: and a man that is condemned already, and stayeth but a while till the stroke of death, for final execution, to treat as calmly of judgment and damnation, as if he were out of danger; and exhorting others to escape the misery which he is in himself, and never dreameth of it! This sheweth how sad a thing it is for men to be ignorant of themselves. To see men run out into damnable and dangerous errors on each hand, some into the proud self-conceitedness of the fanatics, enthusiasts, and libertines; and some into contempt and scorn of holiness, and every one confident, even to rage, in his own distractions: this doth but show us, whither men will go, that are unacquainted with themselves.

This also maketh us so troubled with our auditors, that when they would learn the truth that should convert and save them, are carping and quarrelling with us, and hear us as the Pharisees and Herodians heard Christ, to catch him in his words. And they must tell us themselves what medicine must be given

them, what doctrine, and what administrations they must have. Yea, they that will not be directed or healed by us, will blame us if others be not healed, and hit the minister in the teeth with the errors and faults of his unteachable hearers. Though we do our best, in season and out of season, and they cannot tell us what we have neglected, on our part, that was like to do the cure (though I confess we are too often negligent): and though we succeed to the conversion of many others, yet must we be reproached with the disobedience of the impenitent! As if it were not grief enough to us, to have our labours frustrated, and see them obstinate in their sin and misery, but we must also be blamed or derided for our calamity!

12. Lastly, consider but how many great and necessary things concerning yourselves you have to know, and it will show you how needful it is to make this the first of your studies. To know what you are as men; with what faculties you are endowed, and to what use; for what end you live; in what relation you stand to God and to your fellow-creatures; what duties you owe; what sin is in your hearts; and what hath been, by commission and omission, in your lives; what humiliation, contrition, and repentance you have for that sin; whether you have truly entertained an offered Christ; and are renewed and sanctified by his Spirit; and unreservedly devoted to God, and resolved to be entirely his: whether you love him above all, and your neighbours as yourselves: whether you are justified and have forgiveness of all your sins: whether you can bear afflictions from the hand, or for the

sake of Christ, even to the forsaking of all the world, for the hopes of the heavenly, everlasting treasure : how you perform the daily works of your relations and callings : whether you are ready to die, and are safe from the danger of damnation. O did you but know how it concerneth you to get all these questions well resolved, you would find more matter for your studies in yourselves, than in many volumes. You would then perceive that the matters of your own hearts and lives, are not so lightly and carelessly to be passed over, as they ordinarily are by drowsy sinners.

If you have but many and weighty businesses to think on in the world, you are so taken up with care, that you cannot turn away your thoughts. And yet do you find no work at home, where you have such a world of things to think on, and such as, of all the matters in the world, do most nearly concern you?



CHAPTER V.

Exhortations to cultivate Self-Acquaintance.

HAVING showed you so much reason for this duty, let me now take leave to invite you all, to the serious study of yourselves. It is a duty past all controversy, agreed on by heathens as well as Christians, and urged by them in the general, though many of the particulars to be known are beyond their light. It brutifieth man to be ignorant of himself : “ Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, (him-

self especially,) is as the beasts that perish." Saith Boetius, "It is worse than beastly to be ignorant of ourselves, it being a vice in us, which is nature in them."

Come home, you wandering, self-neglecting souls; lose not yourselves in a wilderness or tumult of impertinent, vain, distracting things; your work is nearer you; the country that you should first survey and travel, is within you; from which you must pass to that above you: when by losing yourselves in this without you, you will find yourselves, before you are aware, in that below you. And then (as Gregory speaks) he that was "a fool in sinning, will be wise in suffering!" You shall then have time enough to review your lives, and such constraining help to know yourselves, 'as you cannot resist. O that you would know but a little of that now, which then you must else know in that overwhelming evidence which will everlastingly confound you! And that you would now think of that for a timely cure, which else must be thought of endlessly in despair. Come home then, and see what work is there. Let the eyes of fools be in the corners of the earth! Leave it to men beside themselves, to live as without themselves, and to be still from home, and waste that time in other business, that was given them to prepare for life eternal. "The soul is more laudable that knows its own infirmity, than he that without discerning this doth search after the compass of the world, the courses of the stars, the foundations of the earth, and the heights of the heavens."—*Augustine*. Dost thou delight in the mysteries of nature? Consider well the mysteries of thy own. "Some men admire the

heights of mountains, the huge waves of the sea, the great falls of the rivers, the compass of the ocean, and the circuit of the stars, and they pass by themselves without admiration." The compendium of all that thou studiest without thee, is near thee, even within thee, thyself being the epitome of the world. If either necessity or duty, nature or grace, reason or faith, internal inducements, external repulses, or eternal attractives and motives, might determine the subject of your studies and contemplations, you would call home your lost, distracted thoughts, and employ them more on yourselves and God.

But before I urge this duty farther, I must prevent the misapplication of some troubled souls. I must confess it is a grievous thing for a guilty soul to judge itself, and see its own deformity and danger: and I observe many troubled, humbled souls, especially where melancholy much prevails, are exceedingly prone to abuse this duty, by excess and misdoing it. Though wandering minds must be called home, we must not run into the other extreme, and shut up ourselves, and wholly dwell on the motions of our own distempered hearts. Though straggling thoughts must be turned inward, and our hearts must be watched, yet must we not be always poring on ourselves, and neglect the rest of our intellectual converse. To pore too long on the disordered motions, the confused thoughts, the wants, the passions of our diseased minds, will but molest us, and cast us into greater disquiet and confusion. The words of Anselme notably express the straits that Christians are here put to, "O grievous strait!

If I look into myself, I cannot endure myself: if I look not into myself, I cannot know myself. If I consider myself, my own face affrighteth me: if I consider not myself, my damnation deceiveth me: if I see myself the horror is intolerable: if I see not myself, death is unavoidable."

In this strait we must be careful to avoid both extremes; and neither neglect the study of ourselves, nor yet exceed in poring on ourselves. To be carelessly ignorant of ourselves, is to undo ourselves for ever. To be too much about ourselves, is to disquiet rather than to edify ourselves; and to turn a great and necessary duty into a great unnecessary trouble.

Consider, 1. That we have many other matters of great importance to study and know, when we know ourselves. We must chiefly study God himself, and all the books of Scripture, nature, and governing providence, which make him known. What abundance of great and excellent truths have we in all these to study! What time, what industry is necessary to understand them! And should we lay out all this time about our own hearts and actions, which is but one part of our study? What sinful omissions should we be guilty of, in the neglecting of all these! It is indeed but the burying of our talent of understanding, to confine it to so narrow a compass as ourselves, and to omit the study of God, and his word and works, which are all, with delight and diligence, to be studied. We have also Christ, and his gospel mysteries and benefits to study. We have the church's ease, its dangers, sufferings, and deliverances to study: we have

the state of our neighbours and brethren to consider of; the mercies, and dangers, and sufferings, both of their souls and bodies: we have our enemies to think of with due compassion; and our duty to all these.

2. And as it is negligence and omission to be all at home, and pass by so great a part of duty; so is it a double frustration of our labour, and will make even this study of ourselves to be in vain. (1.) We cannot come, by all our study, to the true knowledge of ourselves, unless we also study other things besides ourselves. For we are related to God, as his creatures, as his subjects, and as his dependent children, as his redeemed, and his sanctified ones, or should be such. And if we know not God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; as our Owner, Ruler, and Benefactor; and know not what his creation, redemption, sanctification, his title, government, and benefits mean, it is not possible that we should know ourselves. Mutual relations must be known together, or neither can be known.

(2.) And if we could know ourselves, and know no more, it were but to know nothing, and lose that knowledge: for this is but the entrance into wisdom, and the means and way to higher knowledge. This learning of our primer is lost, if we learn no farther; you are therefore to study and know yourselves, that you may advance to the knowledge of Christ and his grace, and be acquainted with the remedy of all that you find amiss at home: and that by Christ you may be brought unto the Father, and know God as your happiness and rest; you are not your own ultimate ends, and therefore must go farther in your studies than yourselves.

3. We shall never attain to rectitude or solid comfort, unless our studies go farther than ourselves; for we are not the rule to ourselves, but crooked lines: and cannot know what is right and wrong, if we study not the rule as well as ourselves. And alas! we are diseased, miserable sinners. And to be always looking on so sad a spectacle, can bring no peace or comfort to the mind. To be still looking on the sore, and hearing only the cry of conscience, will be but a foretaste of hell. When we would be humbled, and have matter of lamentation, we must look homeward, where troubling corruptions grow. But if we would be comforted and lift up, we must look higher, to Christ and to his promises, and to everlasting life: our garden beareth no flowers or fruits that are so cordial.

Two sorts of persons have great need of this caution, that they dwell not too much on themselves. One is, poor melancholy people, that can think of almost nothing else: their distemper disposeth them to be always poring on themselves, and fixing their thoughts on their sin and misery, and searching into all their own miscarriages, and making them worse than indeed they are: you cannot call off their thoughts from continual self-condemning, and musing on their own misdoings and unhappiness. They have a God, a Christ, a heaven, a treasure of precious promises to meditate on: and they cannot hold their thoughts to these, unless, as they aggravate their sin and sorrows, but live as if they had nothing to think on but themselves, and were made to be their own tormentors: day and night, even when they should labour, and when they should sleep,

they are busy in a fruitless vexation of themselves. These poor afflicted souls have need to be called from the excessive study of themselves.

Another sort is, those Christians that are wholly taken up in inquiring, whether they have saving grace or not; while they neglect that exercise of their grace, in doing all the good they can to others, and following on the way of faithful duty, which might do more to their assurance than solitary trials.

The former sort, by overdoing this one part of their work, disable themselves for all the rest; they tire and distract their minds, and raise such fears as hinder their understandings, and cast their thoughts into such confusion, that they quite lose the command of them, and cannot gather them up for any holy work: yea, while they study nothing but themselves, they lose even the knowledge of themselves: they gaze so long upon their faults and wants, till they can see nothing else, and know no apprehensions, but dark and sad; and wilfully unlearn the language of thanksgiving and praise; and the burden of all their thoughts and speeches, is Miserable and Undone; as if there were for them no mercy, no help, no hope, but they were utterly forsaken, and cast off by God.

The other sort do so exceed in the measure of that self-love, which in itself is good, that they neglect the study of the love of God, and are still thinking what they are and have been, when they should consider what they must be. They spend so much time in trying their foundation, that they can make but little progress in the building. They are all day putting on their armour, and preparing

their weapons, when they should be fighting. When they should instruct the ignorant, exhort the obstinate, confirm the weak, or comfort the afflicted, they are complaining of their own ignorance, obstinacy, weakness, or affliction; and help not others, because they feel such need of help themselves. They understand not that it is one of the mysteries of godliness, that teaching others doth inform themselves, and the light which they bring in for others, will serve themselves to work by; and that reproving others doth correct themselves; and exhorting others doth prevail with themselves; and persuading the obstinate wills of others, doth tend to bend and resolve their own; and that comforting others, doth tend to revive and raise themselves: their own spirits may be a little revived, by the very smell of the cordials they prepare for others. In this case, giving is both begging and receiving. Doing good is not the least effectual kind of prayer; and that we may be so employed, is not the smallest mercy. Many a one hath thus grown rich by giving: many a one hath convinced himself, by confuting his own objections from another: and many a one hath raised and comforted himself, by offering comfort to others that have the same infirmities; and have banished their own excessive doubts and fears, by frequent compassionate answering the same in others, whose sincerity they have less suspected than their own.

None thrive more than they that grow in the sunshine of God's blessing: and God blesseth those most that are the most faithful in his work: and the work of love is the work of God. To do good, is to be most like him; and they that are most like

him, do best please him. In subordination to Christ, in whom we are accepted, we must, by his Spirit, be made thus acceptable in ourselves: we must be amiable if we will be loved. And those that God loveth best, and is most pleased with, are like to receive most plenteously from his love. It is necessary, therefore, to our own safety, and holiness, and consolation, that we look much abroad at the necessities of others, and study our brethren, and the church of God, as well as ourselves: that we “look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”

There may be somewhat of inordinate selfishness even about our souls; and sinful selfishness is always a losing course. As he that will be a self-saver, in point of estate, or honour, or life, taketh the ready way to lose them; so he that, for the saving of his soul, will confine all his care and charity to his own soul, taketh not the way indeed to save it. We keep not ourselves; we quicken not, we comfort not, we save not ourselves; but only as agents under Christ, manuring the land, and sowing the seed, to which he alone can give the blessing: it is not, therefore, our inordinate self-studying that will do it. With all our care, without his blessing, we cannot add one cubit to the stature of our graces: therefore, it must needs be our safest course, to be as careful and faithful as we can in duty, and lay out most of our study to please him; and then if we come not to assurance of his love, or discern not his image and grace upon us, yet we must trust him with our souls, and leave the rest to his care and goodness, that hath undertaken that none shall be

losers by him, nor be ashamed, or have their hopes frustrated, that wait upon him: "Let us commit the keeping of our souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." "As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters,—so our eyes, in a way of duty, must wait upon the Lord our God, till he have mercy upon us." And though we "grow weary of crying, and our throat be dried, and our eyes fail while we wait for God," yet "our hope is only in him, and therefore we must continue to wait upon him." "And they that wait for him shall not be ashamed."

It is not the pretended necessity of one work, that will excuse him that hath many as necessary to do; especially when they are conjunct in nature and necessity, and must go together, to attain their end. Concerning God, as we may well say that we must love and serve him only, and none but him, because we must love nothing but for his sake, and as a means to him, the end of all; and so, while it is God in all things that we love, we are more properly said to love God than the creature by that act, because he is the ultimate first intended end, and principal object of that love; and as the means, as a means, hath its essence in its relation to the end; so the love of the means, as such, is accordingly specified; and so we may say of our study and knowledge of God, that nothing but God is to be studied or known; because it is God in the creature that must be studied. It is a defective similitude, as all are, to say, 'As it is the face that we behold the glass for:' for God is more in the creature than the face in the glass. But though all the means be united

in the end, yet are they various among themselves. And therefore, though we must study, know, and love nothing but God, yet we must study, know, and love many things besides ourselves: the means that are many, must all be thought on.

All men will confess, that to confine our charity to ourselves, and to do good to no others, is unlike a Christian. To deny to feed and clothe our brother in his need, is to deny it unto Christ: and it will be no excuse, if we were able to say, ‘I laid it out upon myself.’ And the objects of our charity must be the objects of our thoughts and care: and it will not suffice for our excuse to say, ‘I was taken up at home, I had a miserable soul of my own to think on.’

And yet, if these self-studying souls, that confine almost all their thoughts to themselves, would but seek after God in themselves, and see his grace and benefits, it were the better; but, poor souls! in the darkness of temptation, they overlook their God; and most of their study of themselves, is to see Satan and his workings in themselves; to find as much of his image as they can, in the deformities or infirmities of their souls; but the image of God they overlook, and hardly will acknowledge. And so, as noble objects raise the soul, and amiable objects kindle love, and comfortable objects fill it with delight; and God, who is all in one perfection, doth elevate and perfect it, and make it happy; so inferior objects depress it; and loathsome objects fill it with distaste and loathing; and sad and mournful objects turn it into grief: and therefore, to be still looking on our miseries and deformities, must needs

turn calamity and woe into the temperament and complexion of the soul.

This much I thought needful to be spoken here, to prevent misunderstanding and misapplication; that while I am pressing you to study and know yourselves, I may not encourage any in extremes, nor tempt them to make an ill use of so great and necessary a doctrine. And, indeed, the observation of the sad calamity of many poor, drooping, afflicted souls, that are still poring excessively on their own hearts, commanded me not to overpass this caution. And yet, when I have done it, I am afraid lest those in the contrary extreme, will take encouragement to neglect themselves, by my reprehensions of those that are so unlike them.

And therefore I must add, to save them from deceit; 1. That it is but very few that are faulty in over-studying themselves, in comparison of the many thousands that err on the other hand, in the careless neglecting of themselves. 2. And that it is symptomatically and effectively far more dangerous to study yourselves too little than too much. Though it be a fault to exceed here, yet it is, for the most part, a sign of an honest heart to be much at home, and a sign of a hypocrite to be little at home and much abroad. Sincerity maketh men censurers of themselves; for it maketh them more impartial, and willing to know the truth of their condition: it cureth them of that folly, that before made them think that presumption shall deliver them, and that they shall be justified by believing promises of their own, though contrary to the word of God; yea, by believing the promises of the devil, and calling this

a faith in Christ. They are awakened from that sleep, in which they dreamed that winking would save them from the stroke of justice, and that a strong conceit, that they shall not be damned, will deliver them from damnation; and that they are safe from hell if they can but believe that there is no hell, or can but forget it, or escape the fears of it. These are the pernicious conclusions of the ungodly; discernible in their lives, and intimated in their presumptuous reasonings, though too gross to be openly and expressly owned: and therefore they are indisposed to any impartial acquaintance with themselves.

But grace recovereth men from this distraction, and makes them know, that the judgment of God will not follow the conceits of men; that the knowledge of their disease is necessary to their cure, and the knowledge of their danger is necessary to the prevention; and that it is the greatest madness to go on to hell, for fear of knowing that we are in the way; and to refuse to know it, for fear of being troubled at the news.

And an upright soul is so far fallen out with sin, that he taketh it seriously for his enemy, and therefore is willing to discover it, in order to its destruction, and willing to search after it in order to a discovery. And he hath in him some measure of the heavenly illumination, which maketh him a child of light, and disposeth him to love the light, and therefore cometh to it, "that his deeds may be made manifest." Hypocrites are quick-sighted in discovering the infirmities of others; but at home they shut the windows, and draw the curtains, that they

may not be disturbed or frightened in their sin : darkness suits the works of darkness. It is a good sign when a man dare see his own face in the glass of God's word ; and when he dare hear his conscience speak. I have ever observed it in the most sincere-hearted Christians, that their eye is more upon their own hearts and lives, than upon others : and I have still observed the most unsound professors to be least censorious and regardful of themselves, and hardly drawn to converse at home, and to pass an impartial judgment on themselves.

Hence, therefore, you may be informed of the reason of many other differences between sincere believers and the ungodly. Why is it that the sincere are so ready to discourse about matters of the heart ; and that they so much relish such discourse ; and that they have so much to say when you come to such a subject ? It is because they know themselves in some good measure. They have studied, and are acquainted with the heart, and therefore can talk the more sensibly of what is contained in a book which they have so often read. Talk with them about the matters of the world, and perhaps you may find them more simple and ignorant than many of their neighbours : but when you talk about the corruptions of the heart, and its secret workings ; the matter, and order, and government of the thoughts, and affections, and passions ; the wants and weaknesses of believers ; the nature and workings of inward temptations ; the ways of grace, and of the exercise of each grace ; the motions and operations of the Spirit upon the heart ; the breathings of love and desire after God ; the addresses of the

soul to Christ by faith, and dependence on him, and receivings from him ; about these secret matters of the heart, he is usually more able in discourse than many learned men that are unsanctified.

And hence it is that upright, self-observing souls are so full in prayer, and able to pour out their hearts so enlargedly before the Lord, in confessing their sins, and petitioning for grace, and opening their necessities, and thanking God for spiritual mercies. Some that are themselves acquainted with themselves, and the workings of grace, despise all this, and say, ‘ It is but an ability to speak of the things which they are most used to.’ I doubt not but mere acquired abilities and custom may advance some hypocrites, to pray in the language of experienced Christians. And I doubt not but natural impediments, and want of right education, may cause many to want convenient expressions, that have true desires. But the question is, from whence it comes to pass, that so great a number of those that are most careful and diligent for their souls, are so full in holy conference and prayer, when very few others that excel them in learning and natural parts, have any such ability ? And doubtless the chief reason is, that the care and study of these Christians hath been most about their spiritual estate ; and that which they set their hearts upon, they use their tongues upon : generally it cannot be imagined, why they should use themselves to those studies and exercises which procure those abilities, but that they more highly esteem, and most seriously regard, the matters that concern their salvation, which are the subject. I doubt not but God bestoweth

his gifts upon men in the use of means, and that it is partly use that maketh men able and ready in these services of God. But what reason can be given, why one part of men use themselves to such employments, and another part are unable through disuse, but that some do set their hearts upon it, and make it their business to know themselves, their sins, and wants, and seek relief. when by the others all this is neglected? Some hypocrites may be moved by lower ends, both in this and in other duties of religion; but that is no rule for our judging of the intentions of the generality, or of any that are sincere. As a man that hath lived in the East or West Indies, is able to discourse of the places and people which he hath seen; and perhaps another, by a map or history, may say somewhat of the same subject, though less distinctly and sensibly; but others can say nothing of it: so a man of holy experience in the mysteries of sanctification, that is much conversant at home, and acquainted with his own heart, is able (if other helps concur) to speak what he feels, to God and man, and from his particular observation and experience, to frame his prayers and spiritual conference; and a hypocrite, from reading and common observation, may do something affectedly that is like it: but careless, self-neglecting worldlings, are usually dumb about such matters, and hear you as they do men of another country, that talk in a language which they do not understand, or at least cannot make them any answer in.

But if any of you will needs think more basely and maliciously of the cause of holy prayer and conference in believers, let us leave them, for the pre-

sent, (to the justification of Him that gave them the spirit of supplication, which you reproach,) and let us only inquire what is the reason that men that can discourse as handsomely as others, about worldly matters, have nothing to say, (beyond a few, cold, affected words, which they have learned by rote,) either to God or man, about the matters of the soul, the methods of the Spirit, the workings of a truly penitent heart, or the elevations of faith, and the pantings of desire after God. Why are you dumb when you should speak this language, and frequently and delightfully speak it? Is it because your reason is lower than those men's that speak it, whom you despise? No; you are wise enough to do evil: you can talk of your trades, your honours, or employments, your acquaintance and correspondences all the day long; you are more wordy about these little things, than the preachers themselves, that you count more tedious, are about the greatest. You are much longer in discoursing of your delusory toys, than the lovers of God, whose souls long after him, are in those prayers, which trouble you with their length. Many a time I have been forced to hear your dreaming, incoherent dotage: how copious you are in the words that signify no greater matters than flesh-pleasing, or fanciful honours and accommodations. As the ridiculous orator, "you strain and gape an hour, or a day together, to say nothing." Set all the words of a day together, and peruse them at night, and see what they are worth: there is little higher than visible materials, than meat and drink, and play and compliment, than houses, or lands, or domineering affections, or actions, in many

hours or days' discourse. I think of you sometimes, when I see how ingeniously and busily children do make up their babies of clouts, and how seriously they talk about them, and how every pin and clout is matter of employment and discourse, and how highly they value them, and how many days they can unweariedly spend about them. Pardon my comparison : if you repent not of your discourses and employments more than they, and do not one day call yourselves far worse fools than them, then let me be stigmatized with the most contumelious brand of folly.

It is not then your want of natural faculties and parts, that makes you mute in the matters of God and your salvation, when men of meaner parts than you do speak of those things with the greatest freedom and delight.

And surely it is not for want of an ingenuous education ; as you would take it ill to be thought below them in natural endowments, so much more in those acquisitions and furniture of the mind, which comes by due culture of your faculties. You would disdain, in these, to be compared with many poor rustics and mechanics, that are almost as fluent in speaking of the great things of immortality, as you are in talking of your transient occurrences, your sublunary felicities, and the provisions of your appetites. What, then, can be the cause of this dumb disease, but that you are unacquainted with yourselves ? And as you have not a new birth, and a divine nature, and the Spirit of Christ, to be either the spring and principle, or the matter of your discourse ; so you have not the due knowledge of your

sin and misery, which should teach you in the language of serious penitents, before you have the language of justified believers.

If you say again, ‘It is because we have not been used to this kind of speech.’ I answer, And whence is it that you have not been used to it? If you had known the greatness and goodness of the Lord, as sensibly as they, would not you have used to pray to him, and speak of him as well as they? If you had known, and considered your sin, and wants, and miseries, or dangers, as well as they, would you not have been used to beg mercy, pardon, and relief, and to complain of your distress as much as they? If you did as highly value the matters of eternal consequence as they do, and laid them to heart as seriously as they, would not your minds and hearts have appeared in your speeches, and made you use yourselves to prayer and holy conference as well as others?

If you say, ‘That many have that within them which they are not able to express, or which they think not meet to open unto others,’ I answer,

1. As to ability, it is true of those that have excessive bashfulness, melancholy, or the like; and of those that are so lately converted, that they have not had time to learn and use themselves to a holy language: but what is this to them that are of as good natural parts, and free elocution, as other men, and suppose themselves to have been true Christians long?

2. And, as to the point of prudence which is pleaded for this silence, it is so much against nature, and so much against the word of God, that there is

no room at all for this pretence, unless it be for inferiors, or such as want an opportunity to speak to their superiors, or to strangers; or, unless it be when the thing would be unseasonable.

Nature hath made the tongue the index of the mind; especially to express the matters of most urgency and concern. Do you keep silent on the matters which you most highly esteem; which you most often think of; which you take your life and happiness to consist in; and which you are most deeply affected with, and prefer before all other matters of the world? What a shameful pretence is it, for those that are dumb to prayer and holy conference, for want of any sense of their condition, or love to God, which should open their lips, to talk on them? Is it because their prudence directeth them to silence? When they hold not their tongues about those matters, which they must confess are ten thousand fold less regardable, they can discourse, unweariedly, about their wealth, their sport, their friend, their honour, because they love them: and, if a man should here tell them, that the heart is not to be opened or exercised by the tongue, they would think he knew not the natural use of heart or tongue: and yet, while they pretend to love God above all, they have neither skill nor will to make expression of it, you strike them dumb when you turn the stream of conference that way; and you may almost as well bid them speak in a strange language, as pray to God from the sense of their necessities, and yet they say, their hearts are good.

Let the word of God be judge, whether a holy, experienced heart should hide itself, and not appear

in prayer and holy conference by the tongue. “Pray continually.” “Christ spake a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not wax faint.” “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.”

And how they must pray, you may gather from 2 Chron. vi. 29. In case of dearth, pestilence, mildews, locusts, caterpillars, enemies, sicknesses, or sores, “Then what prayer or supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all the people, when every one shall know his own sore, and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house, then hear thou from heaven,” &c. I am not speaking of the prescribed prayers of the church, nor denying the lawfulness of such in private; but if you have no words but what you say by rote, and pray not from the knowledge of your own particular sore and grief, it is because you are too much unacquainted with yourselves, and strangers to those hearts, where the greatest of your sores and griefs are lodged.

And whether good hearts should be opened in holy conference (as well as prayer), you may easily determine from the command of God, “As every man hath received the gift, so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.” “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” “Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through

the deceitfulness of sin.” “The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment: the law of his God is in his heart,” &c. “Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day.” “The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life. The lips of the righteous feed many.” And Christ himself decideth it expressly, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things.”

For a man that hath no heart to prayer or holy conference, but loathes them, and had rather talk of fleshly pleasures, to pretend that yet his heart is good, and that God will excuse him for not expressing it; and that it is his prudence, and his freedom from hypoerisy, that maketh his tongue to be so much unacquainted with the goodness of his heart, this is but to play the hypocrite to prove that he is no hypocrite, and to cover his ignorance in matters of his salvation, with the expression of his ignorance of the very nature and use of heart and tongue, and to cast by the laws of God, and his own duty, and cover this impiety with the name of *prudence*. If heart and tongue be not used for God, what do you either with a heart or tongue?

The case is plain, to men that can see that it is your strangeness to yourselves, that is the cause that you have little to say against yourselves, when you should confess your sins to God; and so little to say for yourselves, when you should beg his grace; and so little to say of yourselves, when you should open your hearts to those that can advise you: but that

you see not that this is the cause of your dumbness, who see so little of your own corruptions, is no wonder, while you are so strange at home. Had you but so much knowledge of yourselves as to see that it is the strangeness to yourselves that maketh you so prayerless and mute; and so much sense as to complain of your darkness, and be willing to come to the light, it were a sign that light is coming in to you, and that you are in a hopeful way of cure. But when you neither know yourselves, nor know that you do not know yourselves, your ignorance and pride are likely to cherish your presumption and impiety, till the light of grace, or the fire of hell, have taught you better to know yourselves.

2. And here you may understand the reason why people fearing God, are so apt to accuse and condemn themselves, and to be too much cast down; and why they that have cause of greatest joy, do sometimes walk more heavily than others. It is because they know more of their sinfulness, and take more notice of their inward corruptions and outward failings, than presumptuous sinners do of theirs. Because they know their faults and wants, they are cast down; but when they come further to see their interest in Christ and grace, they will be raised up again. Before they are converted, they usually presume, as being ignorant of their sin and misery: in the infancy of grace they know these, but yet languish for want of more knowledge of Christ and mercy. But he that knoweth fully both himself and Christ, both misery and mercy, is humbled and comforted, cast down and exalted. As a man that never saw the sea, is not afraid of it; he that seeth

it but afar off, and thinks he shall never come near it, is not much afraid of it; he that is drowned in it, is worse than afraid; he that is tossed by the waves, and doubteth of ever coming safe to harbour, is the fearful person; he that is tossed, but hath good hopes of a safe arrival, hath fears that are abated or overcome with hope: but he that is safe landed is past his fears. The first is like him that never saw the misery of the ungodly; the second is like him that seeth it in general, but thinks it doth not belong to him; the third is like the damned, that are past remedy; the fourth is like the humbled, doubting Christian, that seeth the danger, but doth too much question or forget the helps; the fifth is like the Christian of a stronger faith, that sees the danger, but withal seeth his help and safety; the sixth is like the glorified saints, that are past the danger.

Though the doubting Christian know not his sincerity, and therefore knoweth not himself so well as the strong believer doth, yet, in that he knoweth his sinfulness and unworthiness, he knoweth himself better than the presumptuous world.



CHAPTER VI.

Exhortations to the Ungodly.

ALL persons to whom I can address this exhortation, are either godly or ungodly; in the state of sin, or in the state of grace. And both of them have need to study themselves.

I. And to begin with the unrenewed, earnal sort, it is they that have the greatest need to be better acquainted with themselves. O that I knew how to make them sensible of it; if any thing will do it, methinks it should be done, by acquainting them how much their endless state is concerned in it. In order hereunto, let me yet add to all that is said already, these few considerations:

1. If you know not yourselves, you know not whether you are the children of God, or not; nor whether you must be for ever in heaven or hell; no, nor whether you may not, within this hour, behold the angry face of God, which will frown you into damnation. And is this a matter for a man of reason to be quietly and contentedly ignorant of? It is a business of such unspeakable concern, to know whether you must be everlastingly in heaven or hell, that no man can spare his cost or pains about it, without betraying and disgracing his understanding. You are sure you shall be here but a little while; those bodies, you all know, will hold your souls but a little longer; as you know that you that are now together here attending, must presently quit this room and be gone, so you know that, when you have stayed a little longer, you must quit this world, and be gone into another. And I think there is not the proudest of you but would be taken down, nor the most sluggish or dead-hearted but would be awakened, if you knew that you must go to endless misery, and that your dying hour would be your entrance into hell. And if you know not yourselves, you know not but it may be so. And to know nothing to the contrary, would be terrible to you if you well con-

sidered it, especially when you have so much cause to fear it. O sirs, for a man to live here senselessly, that knows not but he may burn in hell for ever, and knows not, because he is blind and careless; how unsuitable is it to the principle of self-preservation? And how much unbecoming the rational nature, to have no sense or care, when you look before you into the unquenchable fire, and the utter darkness.

If any of you think that all these matters are to be put to the adventure, and cannot now be known, you are dangerously mistaken. As you may certainly know by Scripture, that there is a future life of joy to the godly, and of misery to the wicked, so may you know, by a faithful trial of yourselves, to which of these at present you belong, and whether you are under the promise or the threatening; know yourselves, and you may know whether you are justified or condemned already, and whether you are the heirs of heaven or hell. Surely He that comforteth his servants with the promise of glory to all that believe and are new creatures, and sanctified by his Spirit, did suppose that we may know whether we believe, and are renewed and sanctified or not: or else, what comfort can it be to us? If blinded infidels, have no means to quiet themselves but their unbelief, and a conceit that there is no such life of misery, they have the most pitiful opiate to ease them in the world; and may as well think to become immortal, by a confident conceit that they shall never die. / If they befool themselves with the ordinary questions, ‘Where is hell, and what kind of fire is it?’ &c. I answer them, with Augustine, “It is better to be in doubt about things that are hidden

from us, than to quarrel about things that are uncertain to us. I am past doubt that we must understand that that rich man was in the heat of pain, and the poor man in a refreshing place of joys: but how to understand that flame in hell, that bosom of Abraham, that tongue of the rich man, that finger of the poor man, that thirst of torment, that drop for cooling or refreshment, perhaps will hardly be found by the most humble inquirers, but never by contentious strivers."

So that I may conclude, that the greatness and dreadfulness of the case, should make every person that hath an eye to see, an ear to hear, and a heart to understand, to read, inquire, and consider; and never rest till they know themselves, and understand where it is that they are going to take up their abode to everlasting.

2. Consider, that all men must shortly know themselves. Presumption will be but of short continuance. Though ever so confident of being saved without holiness, you will speedily be undeceived. If the Spirit's illumination do not convince and undeceive you, death will undoubtedly do it at the farthest. Thousands and millions know their sin and misery now, when it is too late, that would not know it when the remedy was at hand. Sinners! your souls are now in darkness: your bodies are your dungeon; but when death brings you out into the open light, you will see what we could never make you see. O how glad would a faithful minister of Christ be, if, by any information, he could now give you half the light that you shall then have, and now make you know at the heart with the feeling

of repentance, that which you must else quickly know, even at the heart with the feeling of despair. Sirs, I hope you think not that I speak mere fancies to you, or any thing that is questionable or uncertain: you cannot say so without denying yourselves to be Christians; no, nor without contradicting the light of nature, and debasing your souls below the heathen, who believe an immortality of souls in a different state of joy or misery in the life to come: and if you are once below heathens, what are you better than brute beasts? Better in your natural faculties and powers, as not being made brutes by your Creator; but worse as to the use of them, and the consequences to yourselves, because you are voluntary, self-abusing brutes. But to believe you shall die as a beast, will not prevent the miserable life of an impenitent sinner. It will not make your souls to be mortal, to believe they are mortal. Faith and reason can both assure you, that your souls lie not down with your bodies in the dust, nor are annihilated by the falling of your earthly tabernacle; no more than the spirits when the glass is broken that held them: or than the bird is annihilated that is got out of the shell: nor any more than the angels that appeared to the apostles or others, were annihilated when they disappeared: or, (if I must speak more suitably to the ungodly,) no more than the devil, that sometimes appeareth in a bodily shape, is annihilated when that appearance vanisheth. As I suppose there is not a person in all this populous city, that was here but sevenscore years ago, so I suppose there is none of you that expect to be here so long a time: they are gone before you into a

world where there is no presumption or security: and I tell you all, you are going after them apace, and are almost there.

O sirs, that world is a world of light. To the damned souls it is called outer darkness, because they have none of the light of glory or of comfort; but they shall have the light of a self-accusing, self-tormenting conscience, that is gone out of the darkness of self-ignorance and self-deceit, and is fully cured of its slumber and insensibility.

Do you now take a civilized person for a saint? You will not do so long. Doth the baptism of water only go with you now for the regeneration of the Spirit? It will not be so long: you will shortly be undeceived. Doth a ceremonious Pharisee thank God for the sincerity and holiness which he never had? He will shortly be taught better to know the nature of holiness and sincerity, and that God justifieth not all that justify themselves. Doth a little formal, heartless, hypocritical devotion, now cover a sensual, worldly mind? The cover will be shortly taken off, and the nakedness and deformity of the Pharisee will appear. Doth the name of a Christian, and the heartless use of outward ordinances, and that good esteem of others, now go for godliness and saving grace? The autumn is at hand, when these leaves will all lie in the dust, and will go for fruit no longer. Do you now take it for true religion to be hot for lust, and pride, and gain, and cold for God and your salvation? and to obey God as far as will stand with your outward prosperity, and as the flesh, or your other masters will give leave? This is an opinion that never accom-

panied any man beyond the grave. Do you think to be saved by all that devotion, which gives God but the leavings of the flesh and world, and by a religion that gives him but the outer rooms (when pleasure and gain are next your hearts), and that makes him but an underling to your covetousness and ambition? Think so if you can, when you are gone hence. Cannot the preacher now make the ungodly to know that they are ungodly, the unsanctified to know they are but carnal, and the Pharisee to know that his religion is vain? Death can convince the awakened soul of all this in a moment.

You can choose whether you will believe us; but death will so speak as to be believed. You must be voluntary in knowing your misery now: but then you shall know it against your wills. You must open your eyes, if you will see yourselves by the light which we bring to you; but death irresistibly throws open all. To say, in pride and obstinacy, 'I will not believe it,' will now serve the turn to quiet your consciences, and make you seem as safe as any; but when God saith, 'You shall feel it,' your unbelief is ineffectual: it can then torment you, but it can no longer ease you. There is then no room for 'I will not believe it.' / God can, without a word, persuade you of that which you were resolved you would never be persuaded of. / While you are in the body, you are every one affected according as you apprehend your state to be, whether it be indeed as you apprehend it or not; but when death hath opened you the door into eternity, you will be all affected with your conditions as they are indeed. To day you are quiet, because you think your

souls are safe; and some are troubled, that think they are in a state of misery: and it is likely that some on both sides are mistaken; and the quiet of one, and the disquiet of another, may arise for want of the knowledge of yourselves. But death will rectify both these errors; and then, if you are unsanctified, no false opinions, no unbelief, no confident conceits of your integrity, will abate your desperation, or give any ease to your tormented minds; nor will there be any doubts, or fears, or despairing, self-afflicting thoughts, to disquiet those that Christ hath justified, or abate their joys.

O how many thousands will then think much otherwise of themselves than they now do! Death turns you out of the company of flatterers, and calls you out of the world of error, where men laugh and cry in their sleep; and bringeth you among awakened souls, where all things are called by their proper names, and all men know themselves to be as they are indeed. / Serious religion is not there a derision; nor loving, and seeking, and serving God with all the heart, and soul, and might, is not there taken for unnecessary preciseness. God judgeth not as man, by outward appearances, but with righteous judgment: "That which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God." And he will make you then to judge of yourselves as he hath judged you. Though wisdom now be justified but of her children, it shall then be justified by all: not by a sanctifying, but a constrained, involuntary, tormenting light; and though now men can believe as well of themselves, as self-love and the quieting of their consciences doth require, yet then they will have lost this mastery over their own conceits.

O therefore, seeing you are all going into an irresistibly convincing light, and are almost in that world where all must fully know themselves; seeing “nothing is covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be made known,” and no unsanctified hypoerite doth flatter himself into such high presumption, but a dying hour will take him down, and turn it all into endless desperation, if true conversion prevent not; I beseech you be more conversant with conscience than you have been: be ashamed, that you who know nothing better than flesh to adorn and to be careful of, should bestow more hours in looking into the glass, than you bestow to look into God’s word and your own hearts; yea, more in a year, than you have thus bestowed in all your lives!

O that you knew what a profitable companion conscience is for you to converse with! You would not then think yourselves so solitary as to be destitute of company and employment, while you have so much to do at home, and one in your bosom that you have so much business with.

And it is a necessary and inseparable companion. If conscience should chide you when you had rather be flattered; yet there is no running from it for more pleasant company. (Conscience is married to you, please it on safe terms as well as you can; but do not think to overrun it: for it will follow you; or you must return to it home again, when you have gone your furthest. There is no expectation of a divorce; no, not by death: it will follow you to eternity. And therefore be not strange to conscience, that will be your comforter or tormentor at the hour of death;

that can do so much to make sickness, and all suffering, light or grievous; and to make death welcome or terrible to you. Fly not from conscience, that must dwell with you for ever.

O foolish sinners! do you want company and business to pass away your time? Are you fain to go to cards or dice to waste this treasure, which is more precious than your money? Do you go to an alehouse, a playhouse, to seek for company or pastime? Do you forget what company and business you have at home? As you love your peace and happiness, instead of conversing with vain, lascivious, or ungodly persons, O spend that time in converse with your consciences! You may there have a thousand times more profitable discourse. Be not offended to give conscience a sober, faithful answer, if it ask you, What have you done with all your time? and how you have lived in the world? and how you have obeyed the calls of grace? and how you have entertained Christ in your hearts? and whether you have obeyed him or his enemy? and whether you have been led by the Spirit or the flesh? and what forwardness the work of your salvation is in? and what assurance you have of your justification and salvation? and what readiness to die? Think it not presumption in conscience thus to examine you: though you have perhaps unthankfully disdained to be thus examined by your pastors, whose office is to help you, and watch for your souls, yet do not disdain to be accountable to yourselves. Accountable you must be, ere long, to God; and that friend that would help you to make ready such accounts, on which so great a weight dependeth, methinks should be

welcomed with a thousand thanks. Ministers and conscience should be acceptable to you, that come on so necessary a work.

The chidings of conscience are more friendly language than the flattery of your ignorant or proud associates; and should be more grateful to you than “the laughter of fools, which is like the crackling of thorns in the fire.” Thy own home, though it be a house of mourning, is better for thee than such a sinful house of mirth. Hear but what conscience hath to say to you. No one will speak with you, that hath words to speak which more nearly concern you. I beseech you, sirs, be more frequent and familiar with conscience than most men are. Think not the time lost when you walk and talk with it alone. Confer with it about your endless state, and where you are likely to be for ever, and what thoughts you will have of your sins and duties, of the world and God, of yielding or overcoming at the last. Is there no sense in this discourse? Thou art dead and senseless if thou think so. Is idle talk and prating better? I hope you are not so distracted as to say so. If you have not blinded, deceived, or bribed it, I tell you, conscience hath other kind of discourse for you; more excellent and necessary things to talk of, than wantons, or worldlings have. It is better to be giving conscience an account, what business thou hast had so often in such company; and how thou wouldst have looked, if death had found thee there, than, without leave from God or conscience, to go thither again.

The thriving way is neither to be still at home, nor still abroad; but to be at home when home-work

is to be done, and to be abroad only for doing and getting good, in a way of diligent Christian trading, and to bring that home that is got abroad. When you have done with conscience, converse with others that your business lieth with, and go abroad when it is for your Master's work : but go not upon idle errands ; converse not with prodigal wasters of your time, and enemies to your souls. One time or other conscience will speak, and have a hearing : the sooner the better. Put it not off to a time so unseasonable as death : I say, not unseasonable for conscience to speak in, but unseasonable for it to begin to speak in ; and unseasonable for those terrible words that need a calmer time for answer ; and unseasonable for so many things and so great, as self-betrayers use to put off until then, which need a longer time for due consideration and despatch.

3. And I beseech you consider, with what amazing horror it must needs surprise you, to find on a sudden, and unexpectedly, when you die, that all is worse with you than you imagined or would believe ! After a whole life of confident presumption, to be suddenly convinced by so dreadful an experience of your so long and wilful a mistake ! To find, in a moment, that you have flattered your souls into so desperate a state of woe ! To see and feel all the selfish cavils and reasonings confuted, in one hour, which the wisest and holiest men on earth could never beat you from before ! O, sirs, you know not what a day, what a conviction, that will be ! You know not what it is for a guilty soul to pass out of the body, and find itself in the plague of an unsanctified state, and hated of the holy God, that never would know

it till it was too late. You know not what it is to be turned, by death, into the world of spirits, where all self-deceit is detected by experience, and all must undergo a righteous judgment; where blindness and self-love can no more persuade the miserable that they are happy, the unholy that they are sanctified, the fleshly-minded men that they are spiritual, the lovers of the world that they are the lovers of God. Men cannot there believe what they list; nor take that for a truth which makes for their security, be it ever so false: men cannot there believe that they are accepted of God, while they are in the bonds of their iniquity; or that their hearts are as good as the best, while their tongues and lives are opposite to goodness, or that they shall be saved as soon as the godly, though they be ungodly.

It is easy for a man to hear of waves, and gulfs, and shipwreck, that never saw the sea; and, without any trouble, to hear of sickness and tormenting pains, and cutting off of limbs, that never felt such things. It is easy for you, in the midst of health, and peace, and quietness, to hear of a departing soul, and where it shall appear, and what it shall there see, and how great a discovery death will make. But, O sirs, when this must be your case, (as you know it must be, alas, how speedily !) these matters will then seem considerable: they will be new and strange to those that have heard of them a hundred times, because they never heard of them sensibly till now. One of those souls that have been here before you, and have passed into eternity, have other thoughts of these things than you have ! O how do they think now, of the fearless slumber and stupidity of those that

they have left behind ! What think they now of those that wilfully fly the light, and flatter themselves in guilt and misery, and make light of all the joys and torments of the other world ? Even as the damned rich man in Luke xvi. thought of his poor brethren, that remained in prosperity and presumption upon earth, and little thought what company he was in, what a sight he saw, and what he did endure !

Poor careless souls ! you know not now what it is, for the ungodly to see that they are ungodly, by the irresistible light of another world ; and for the unholy to feel in hell that they are unholy, and to be taught by flames, and the wrath of the Almighty, what is the difference between the sanctified and the carnal, between an obedient and a rebellious life. While here, you little know these things : you see them not, you feel them not ; and the Lord grant you may never so know them by woful experience. That you may escape such a knowledge, is the end of all that I am saying to you : but that will not be, but by another kind of knowledge, even the knowledge of belief and serious consideration.

For your souls' sake, therefore, come to the light, and try yourselves, and shuffle not over a work of such unspeakable consequence, as the searching of your hearts, and judging of your spiritual state ! O be glad to know what you are indeed ! Put home the question, ' Am I sanctified or not ? Am I in the Spirit or in the flesh ? ' Be glad of any help for the sure resolution of such doubts. Take not up with slight and venturous presumptions. It is your own case ; your nearest and your greatest case ; all lies upon it : who should be so willing of the plainest

dealing, the speediest and the closest search, as you? O be not surprised by an unexpected sight of an un-renewed, miserable soul at death? If it be so, see it now, while seeing it may do good: if it be not so, a faithful search can do you no harm, but comfort you by the discovery of your sincerity. Say not too late, ‘ I thought I had been born again of the Spirit, and had been in a state of grace: I thought I had been a child of God, and reconciled to him, and justified by faith!’ O what a heart-tearing word would it be to you, when time is past, to say, ‘ I thought it had been better with me!’

4. Consider, also, that it is one of Satan’s principal designs of your damnation, to keep you ignorant of yourselves. He knows, if he can but make you believe that you are regenerate, when you are not, you will never seek to be regenerate; and that if he can make you think that you are godly, when you are ungodly, and have the Spirit of Christ, while you are servants to the flesh, he may defeat all the labours of your teachers, and let them call on you to be converted till their hearts ache, to no purpose, but leave you as you are. He knows how light you will sit by the physician, if he can but make you believe that you are well; and how little care you will take for a pardon, if you think that you have one already. In vain we may call on you to turn, and become new creatures, and give up yourselves to Christ, if you think that you are good Christians, and are in the way to heaven already.

And when you know beforehand, that *there* lieth the principal game of the deceiver, and that it will be his chief contrivance, to keep you unacquainted with

your sin and danger, till you are past recovery, one would think there should be no need to bid you to be diligent to know yourselves.

5. And I beseech you consider also, that without this design there is no likelihood that Satan could undo you: if he keep you not ignorant of yourselves, he is never likely to keep you in his power: you come out of his kingdom when you come out of darkness. He knoweth that if once you did but see how near you stand to the brink of hell, you would think it time to change your standing.

There is a double principle in nature, that would do something towards your repentance and recovery, if your eyes were opened to see where you are.

1. There is, since the seduction and ruin of man, by Satan's temptations, an enmity put into the whole nature of man against the whole satanical, serpentine nature; so that this natural enmity would so much conduce to your deliverance, as that you would not be contented with your relation, if you knew that you are the slaves of the devil; nor would you be charmed into sin so easily, if you knew that it is he indeed that doth invite you: no language would be so taking with you, which you knew was uttered by his voice. It would do much to affright you from his service, if you knew that it is he indeed that setteth you on to work, and is gratified by it. He keepeth men in his bondage, by making them believe that they are free: he persuadeth men to obey him, by persuading them that it is God that they obey: and he draweth them to hell by making them believe that they are following Christ to heaven; or at least, that they are following the inclination of their nature in a pardonable infirmity.

2. And the natural principle of self-love would, in order to self-preservation, do much to drive you from your sinful state, if you did but know what a state it is. There is no man so far hateth himself, as to be willing to be damned. You cannot choose a habitation in hell; for such a place can never be desired. Surely he that cannot choose but to fly from an enemy, or from fire, or water, or pestilence, when he perceives his danger, would fly from hell if he perceived his danger.

I beseech you all, that are secure in an unsanctified state, do but look inwards, and help me in preaching this doctrine to your hearts, and tell yourselves, whether you do think that your state is good, and that you are the children of God as well as others; and that though you are sinners, yet your sins are pardoned by the blood of Christ, and that you shall be saved if you die in the state that you are in? And are not these thoughts the reason why you venture to continue in your present state, and look not after so great a change as Scripture speaketh of as necessary?

And I pray you deal plainly with your hearts, and tell me, you careless sinners, young or old, that live here as quietly as if all were well with you, If you did but know that you are at this hour unregenerate, and that without regeneration there is no salvation: if you did but know that you are yet carnal and unholy, and that "without holiness none shall see God:" if you did but know that you are yet in a state of enmity to God while you call him Father, and of enmity to Christ, while you call him your Saviour, and of enmity to the Holy Spirit,

while you call him your Sanctifier : if you did but know, that your sins are unpardoned, and your souls unjustified, and that you are condemned already, and shall certainly be damned if you die as you are, Could you live quietly in such a state? Could you sleep, and eat, and drink quietly, and follow your trades, and let time run on without repenting and returning unto God, if you knew that you are past hope, if death surprise you in this condition? For the Lord's sake, sirs, rouse up yourselves a little, and be serious in a business that concerneth you more than ten thousand natural lives; and tell me, or rather tell yourselves, If you did but know that while you live here, you are unrenewed, and therefore under the curse of God, and in the bondage of the devil, and are hastening towards perdition, if you be not sanctified and made new creatures before you die—could you forbear going alone, and there bethink yourselves, ‘ O what a sinful, dreadful condition are we in! What will become of us, if we be not regenerate before we die! Had we no understandings, no hearts, no life or sense, that we have lingered so long, and lived so carelessly in such a state! O where had we been now, if we had died unregenerate! How near have we been oft to death! How many sicknesses might have put an end to life and hope! Had we died before this day, we had been now in hell without remedy.’ Could any of you that knew this to be your case, forbear to betake yourselves to God, and cry to him, in the bitterness of your souls, ‘ O Lord, what rebels, what wretches have we been! We have sinned against heaven and before thee, and are no more worthy to be called

thy children ! O how sin hath captivated our understandings, and conquered our very sense, and made us live like men that were dead, as to the love and service of God, and the work of our salvation, which we were created and redeemed for ! O Lord, have mercy upon these blind and senseless miserable souls ! Have mercy upon these despisers and abusers of thy mercy ! O save us or we perish ! Save us from our sins, from Satan, from thy curse and wrath ! Save us, or we are undone and lost for ever ! Save us from the unquenchable fire, from the worm that never dieth ! from the bottomless pit, the outer darkness, the horrid gulf of endless misery ! O let the bowels of thy compassion yearn over us ! O save us for thy mercy sake ; shut not out the cries of miserable sinners. Regenerate, renew, and sanctify our hearts ; O make us new creatures ! O plant thine image on our souls, and incline them towards thee, that they may be wholly thine ! O make us such as thou commandest us to be ! Away with our sins, and sinful pleasures, and sinful company ! We have had too much, too much of them already ! Let us now be thine, associated with them that love and fear thee ; employed in the works of holiness and obedience all our days ! Lord, we are willing to let go our sins, and to be thy servants : or if we be not, make us willing.'

What say you, sirs, if you knew that you were this hour in a state of condemnation, could you forbear making haste with such confessions, complaints, and earnest supplications to God ? And could you forbear going presently to some faithful minister, or godly friend, and telling him your case and danger,

and begging his advice, and prayers, and asking him, what a poor sinner must do to be recovered, pardoned, and saved, that is so deep in sin and misery, and hath despised Christ and grace so long? Could you tell how to sleep quietly many nights more, before you had earnestly sought for help, and made this change? How could you choose but presently betake yourselves to the company, and converse, and examples of the godly that are within your reach? (For whenever a man is truly changed, his friendship and company is changed, if he have opportunity.) And how could you choose but go and take your leave of your old companions, and with tears and sorrow tell them, how foolishly and sinfully you have done, and what wrong you have done each other's souls, and entreat them to repent and do so no more, or else you will renounce them, and fly from their company as from a pestilence?

Can a man forbear thus to fly from hell, if he saw that he is as near it as a condemned traitor to the gallows? He that will beg for bread, if he be hungry, would beg for grace, if he saw and felt how much he needeth it: and seeing it, is the way to feel it. He that will seek for medicines when he is sick, and would do almost any thing to escape a temporal death, would he not seek to Christ, the remedy of his soul, if he knew and felt that otherwise there is no recovery? and would he not do much against eternal death? "Skin for skin, and all that a man hath, he will give for his life," was a truth that the devil knew, and maketh use of in his temptations. And will a man then be regardless of his soul, that knows he hath an immortal soul? and

of life eternal, that knows his danger of eternal death?

O, sirs, it is not possible, but the true knowledge of your state of sin and danger, would do very much to save you from it. For it is a wilful, chosen state. All the devils in hell cannot bring you to it, and continue you in it against your will. You are willing of the sin, though unwilling of the punishment. And if you truly knew the punishment, and your danger of it, you would be the more unwilling of the sin; for God hath affixed punishment to sin for this end, that they that else would love the serpent, may hate it for the sting. Foreseeing is to a man, what seeing is to a beast; if he see it before his eyes, a beast will not easily be driven into a coal-pit or a gulf; he will draw back and strive, if you go about to kill him. And is he a man, or some monster that wants a name, that will go on to hell, when he seeth it, as it were, before him? and that will continue in a state of sin, when he knows he must be damned in hell for ever, if he so continue to the end? Indeed sin is the deformity of the soul. He is a monster of blindness that seeth not the folly and peril of such a state, and that a state of holiness is better. And he is a monster of slothfulness, that will not stir when he finds himself in such a case, and seek for mercy, and value the remedy, and use the means, and forsake his sinful course and company, till mercy take him up and bring him home, and make him welcome, as “one that was lost but now is found, was dead, but is alive.”

I do not doubt, for all these expostulations, but

some men may be such monsters, as thus to see that they are in a state of wrath and misery, and yet continue in it.

As, 1. Such as have but a glimmering, insufficient sight of it, and a half belief, while a greater belief and hope of the contrary, that is, presumption, is predominant at the heart. But these are rather to be called men ignorant of their misery, than men that know it; and men that believe it not, than men that do believe it, as long as the ignorance and presumption is the prevailing part.

2. Such as, by the rage of appetite and passion, are hurried into deadly sin, and so continue, whenever the tempter offereth them the bait against their conscience, and some apprehension of their misery. But these have commonly a prevalent self-flattery secretly within, encouraging and upholding them in their sin, and telling them, that the reluctancies of their consciences are the Spirit's strivings against the flesh, and their fits of remorse are true repentance; and though they are sinners, they hope they are pardoned, and shall be saved, so that these do not know themselves indeed.

3. Such as, by their deep engagements in the world, and love of its prosperity, and a custom in sinning, are so hardened, and cast into a slumber, that though they have a secret knowledge, or suspicion, that their ease is miserable, yet they are not awakened to the due consideration and feeling of it; and therefore they go on as if they knew it not: but these have not their knowledge in exercise. It is but a candle in a dark lantern, that now and then gives them a convincing flash, when the right side

happens to be towards them; or like lightning, that rather frightens and amazeth them, than directeth them. And, as I said of the former, their self-ignorance is the predominant part, and therefore they cannot be said indeed to know themselves.

4. Such as, being in youth or health, do promise themselves long life, or others that foolishly put away the day of death, and think they have yet time enough before them; and therefore, though they are convinced of their misery, and know they must be converted or condemned, do yet delay, and quiet themselves with purposes to repent hereafter, when death draws near, and there is no other remedy but they must leave their sins, or give up all their hopes of heaven. Though these know somewhat of their present misery, it is but an ineffectual knowledge; and they know little of the wickedness of their hearts, while they confess them wicked, otherwise they could not imagine, that repentance is so easy a work to such as they, as that they can perform it when their hearts are further hardened, and that their salvation may be ventured on it by delays. Did they know themselves, they would know the backwardness of their hearts; and manifold difficulties should make them see the madness of delays, and of longer resisting and abusing the grace of the Spirit, that must convert them, if ever they be saved.

5. Such as have light to show them their misery, but live where they hear not the discovery of the remedy, and are left without any knowledge of a Saviour. I deny not but such may go on in a state of misery, though they know it, when they know no way out of it.

6. Such as believe not the remedy, though they hear of it, but think that Christ is not to be believed in, as the Saviour of the world.

7. Such as believe that Christ is the Redeemer, but believe not that he will have mercy upon them, as supposing their hearts are not qualified for his salvation, nor ever will be, because the day of grace is past, and he hath concluded them under a sentence of reprobation; and therefore thinking that there is no hope, and that their endeavours would be all in vain, they cast off all endeavours, and give up themselves to the pleasures of the flesh, and say, 'It is as good to be damned for something, or for a greater matter, as for a less.'

So that there are three sorts of despair, that are not equally dangerous. 1. A despair of pardon and salvation, arising from infidelity, as if the Gospel were not true, nor Christ a Saviour to be trusted with our souls, if predominant, is damnable. 2. A despair of pardon and salvation, arising from a misunderstanding of the promise, as if it pardoned not such sins as ours, and denied mercy to those that have sinned so long as we; this is not damnable necessarily of itself, because it implieth faith in Christ; and not infidelity, but misunderstanding, hindereth the applying, comforting act; and therefore this actual personal despair, is accompanied with a general actual hope, and with a particular personal, virtual hope. 3. A despair of pardon and salvation, upon the misunderstanding of ourselves, as thinking both that we are graecless, and always shall be so, because of the blindness and hardness of our hearts. Of this despair, I say as of the former, it is joined

with faith, and with general and virtual hope: and, therefore, is not the despair that, of itself, condemneth. Many may be saved that are too much guilty of it.

But if either of these two latter sorts shall so far prevail, as to turn men off from a holy, to a fleshly, worldly interest and life, and make them say, 'We will take our pleasure while we may, and will have something for our souls before we lose them,' and do accordingly; this kind of desperation is damnable by the effects, because it takes men off the means of life, and giveth them up to damning sins.

Thus I have showed you of seven sorts of persons that may know themselves, their sin and danger, with such an ineffectual, partial knowledge as I have described, and yet continue in that sin and misery.

And in two cases, even sound believers may possibly go on to sin, when they see the sin: and not only see the danger of it, but despairingly think it greater than it is. As, 1. In case of common, unavoidable failings, infirmities, and low degrees of grace: we are all imperfect, and yet we all know that it is our duty to be perfect, (as perfection is opposed to sinful, and not to innocent perfection,) and yet this knowledge maketh us not perfect. We know we should be more humbled, and more believing, and more watchful, and love God more, and fear and trust him more, and be more fruitful and diligent, and obedient and zealous; and yet we are not what we know we should be in any of these. In these we all live in sin against knowledge; else we should be all as good as we know we ought to be, which no man is. And if, through temptation,

any of us should be ready to despair, because of any of these infirmities, because we cannot repent, or love God, watch, or pray, or obey more perfectly, or as we should, yet grace ceaseth not to be grace, though in the least degree, because we are ready to despair for want of more. Nor will the sincerity of this spark, or grain of mustard seed, be unsuccessful, as to our salvation, because we think so, and take ourselves to be insincere, and our sanctification to be none; nor yet because we cannot be as obedient and good as we know we should be. For the Gospel saith not, ‘He that knoweth he hath faith or sincerity shall be saved; and he that knoweth it not, shall be damned: or he that is less holy or obedient than his conscience tells him he should be, shall be damned.’ But, “He that believeth and repenteth, shall be saved,” whether he know it to be done in sincerity or not: and “he that doth not, shall be damned,” though he ever so confidently think he doth. So that, in the degrees of holiness and obedience, all Christians ordinarily sin against knowledge.

2. And besides what is ordinary, some extraordinarily, in the time of a powerful temptation, go further than ordinarily they do. And some, under melancholy or choleric distempers of body, or under a diseased, violent appetite, may transgress more against their knowledge, than otherwise they would do. When the spirits are flattened, the thoughts confused, the reason weakened, the passion strengthened, and the executive faculties indisposed, so that their actions are but imperfectly human or moral; (imperfectly capable of virtue or vice, good or evil)

it is no wonder here, if poor souls not only perceive their sin, but think it and the danger to be tenfold greater than they are, and yet go on against their knowledge, and yet have true grace.

This much I have said, both to stay you from misunderstanding what I said before, concerning the power of conviction to conversion, and also to help you to the fuller understanding of the matter itself, of which I treat. But exceptions strengthen and not weaken any rule or proposition in the points not excepted. Still I say, that out of these eases, the true knowledge of a sinful, miserable state, is so great a help to bring us out of it, that it is hardly imaginable, how rational men can wilfully continue in a state of such exceeding danger, if they be but well acquainted that they are in it. I know a hardened heart hath an unreasonable, obstinate opposition against the means of its own recovery: but yet men have some use of reason and self-preserving love and care, or they are not men. And though little transient lightnings often come to nothing, but leave some men in greater darkness; yet could we but set up a standing light in all your consciences, could we fully convince and resolve the unregenerate, that they cannot be saved in the carnal state they are in, but must be sanctified or never saved; what hopes should we have, that all the subtleties and snares of Satan, and all the pleasures and gain of sin, and all the allurements of ungodly company, could no longer hinder you from falling down at the feet of mercy, and begging forgiveness, through the blood of Christ, and giving up yourselves in covenant to the Lord, and speedily and resolutely betaking your-

selves to a holy life ! Could I but make you thoroughly known unto yourselves, I should hope that all the unsanctified would date their conversion from this very day ; and that you would not delay till the next morning, to bewail your sin and misery, and fly to Christ, lest you should die, and be past hope this night.

And doth so much of our work, and of your recovery, lie upon this point, and yet shall we not be able to accomplish it ? Might you be brought into the way to heaven, if we could but persuade you that you are yet out of the way ; and will you be undone, because you will not suffer so small and reasonable a part of the cure as this ? O God forbid ! O that we knew how to illuminate your minds so far, as to make you find that you are lost ! how ready would Christ be then to find you, and to receive and welcome you, upon your return ! Here is the first difficulty, which if we could but overcome, we should hope to conquer all the rest. O that any of you that know the nature of self-deceit, and know the fallacious reasonings of the heart, could tell us but how we might undeceive them ! O that any of you that know the nature of human understanding, with its several maladies, and their cure, and know the power of saving truth, could tell us what key will undo this lock ! what medicine will cure this disease, of wilful, obstinate, self-deceiving ! Think but on the case of our poor people, and of ours, and sure you cannot choose but pity both them and us. We are all professors of the Christian faith, and all say we believe the word of God. This word assureth us, that all men are fallen in Adam,

and are "by nature children of wrath," and increase in sin and misery, till supernatural grace recover them. It tells us, that the Redeemer is become, by office, the Physician or Saviour of souls; washing away their guilt by his blood, and renewing and cleansing their corrupted natures by his Spirit. It tells us, that he will freely work the cure, for all that will take him for their physician, and will forgive and save them that penitently fly to him, and value, and accept, and trust in his grace: and that except they be thus made new creatures, all the world cannot save them from everlasting wrath. This is the doctrine that we all believe, or say we believe. Thus doth it open the case of sinners. We come now, according to our office, and the trust reposed in us, and we tell our hearers what the Scripture saith of man, and what it commandeth us to tell them. We tell them of their fall, their sin and misery; of the Redeemer, and the sure and free salvation, which they may have if they will but come to him. But, alas! we cannot make them believe that they are so sick, as to have need of the Physician: and that they are dead, and have need of a new creation, as to the inclination of their hearts, and the end, and bent, and business of their lives. We are sent to tender them the mercy of Christ, but we cannot make them believe that they are miserable. We are sent to offer them the riches, and eye-salve, and white raiment of the Gospel; but we cannot make them know that they are poor, and blind, and naked. We are sent to call them to repent and turn, that they may be saved; and we cannot make them know that they need a change of

heart and life. Here they sit before us, and we look on them with pity, and know not how to help them. We look on them, and think, Alas, poor souls, you little see what death will quickly make you see! You will then see that there is no salvation, by all the blood and merits of Christ, for any but the sanctified: but O that we could now make you understand it! We look on them with compassion; and think, Alas, poor souls, a change is near! It will be thus with you but a little while, and where will you be next? We know, as sure as the word of God is true, that they must be converted and sanctified, or be lost for ever: and we cannot make them believe, but that the work is done already. The Lord knoweth, and our consciences witness to our shame, that we be not half so sensible of their misery, nor so compassionate towards them as we ought to be. But yet sometimes our hearts melt over them, and fain we would save them from the "wrath to come;" and we should have great hopes of the success, if we could but make them know their danger. It melts our hearts to look on them, and think that they are so near damnation, and never likely to escape it, till they know it; till they know that their corruption is so great, that nothing but the quickening Spirit can recover them, and nothing less than to become new creatures will serve the turn. O that we knew how to get within them, to open the windows, that the light of Christ might show them their condition! But when we have done all, we find it past our power. We know they will be past help in hell, if they die before they are regenerate. And could we but get themselves to

know it, they would better look about them and be saved. But we are not able. It is more than we can do. We cannot get the grossest worldling, the basest sensualist, the proudest child of the spirit of pride, to know that he is in a state of condemnation, and must be sanctified or be damned. Much less can we procure the formal Pharisee, thus to know himself. We can easily get them to confess that they are sinners, and deserve damnation, and cannot be saved without Christ; but this will not serve: the best saint on earth must say as much as this. There are converted and unconverted sinners, sanctified and unsanctified sinners, pardoned and unpardoned sinners; sinners that are members of Christ, the children of God, and heirs of heaven, and sinners that are not so. They must know not only that they are sinners, but that they are yet unconverted, unsanctified, unpardoned sinners; not only that they cannot be saved without Christ, but that they have no special interest in Christ: they will not so value and seek for conversion, and remission, and adoption, as to obtain them, while they think they have them already. They will not come to Christ that they may have life, while they think they have part in Christ already. Paul, after his conversion, was a sinner, and had need of Christ: but Paul, before his conversion, was an unsanctified, unjustified sinner, and had no part in Christ. This is the state of sin and misery that you must come out of, or you are lost: and how can you be brought out of it, till you know that you are in it?

O therefore that we knew how to make you know it! How should we make poor sinners see that

they are within a few steps of everlasting fire, that we might induce them to run away from it, and be saved ! We cry so often, and lose our labour, and leave so many in their security and self-deceits, that we are discouraged, and remit our desires, and lose our compassion ; and, alas ! grow dull, and too insensible of their case, and preach too often as coldly as if we could be content to let them perish. We are too apt to grow weary of holding the light to men asleep, or that shut their eyes and will not see it. When all that we have said is not regarded, and we know not what more to say, this damps our spirits ; this makes so many of us preach almost as carelessly as we are heard. Regardless, sleepy hearers, make regardless, sleepy preachers. Frequent frustration abateth hope : and the fervour and diligence of prosecution ceaseth, as hope abateth. This is our fault : your insensibility is no good excuse for ours : but it is a fault not easily avoided.

And when we are stopped at the first door, and cannot conquer Satan's outworks, what hope have we of going further ? If all that we can say, will not convince you that you are yet unsanctified and unjustified, how shall we get you to the duties that belong to such, in order to the attainment of this desirable state ?

And, here, I think it not unreasonable to inform you, why the most able, faithful ministers of Christ do search so deep, and speak so hardly of the case of unrenewed souls, as much displeaseth many of their hearers, and makes them say, they are too severe and terrible preachers. The zealous Antinomian saith, they are legalists ; and the profane Antinomian saith,

they rail and preach not mercy, but judgment only, and would drive men to despair. But will they tell God he is a legalist, for making the law, even the Gospel law, as well as the law of nature, and commanding us to preach it to the world? Shall they escape the sentence, by reproaching the law-maker? Will not God judge the world; and judge them by a law; and will he not be just, and beyond the reach of their reproach? O, sinner, this is not the smallest part of thy terror, that it is the Gospel that speaks this terror to thee, and excludes thee from salvation, unless thou be made new: it is mercy itself that thus condemneth thee, and judgeth thee to endless misery. You are mistaken, sirs, when you say we preach not mercy, and say we preach not the Gospel, but the law: it is the Gospel that saith, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven! and that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his." The same Gospel that saith, "He that believeth shall be saved," saith also, that "He that believeth not shall be damned." Will you tell Christ, the Saviour of the world, that he is not merciful, because he talks to you of damnation? Mercy itself, when it tells you that "there is no condemnation," doth limit this pardon to them "that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." It is sanctifying mercy that must save you, if ever you be saved, as well as justifying mercy. And will you refuse this mercy, and by no entreaty yield to have it, and yet think to be saved by it? What! saved by that mercy which you will not have? And will you say, we preach not mercy, because we tell you, that mercy will not

save you, if you continue to reject it? To be saved by mercy without sanctification, is to be saved and not saved; to be saved by mercy, without mercy: your words have no better sense than this. And are those afraid, lest preachers should make them mad, by showing them their need of mercy, that are no wiser than to cast away their souls upon such senseless, self-contradicting conceits as these?

I beseech you, tell us whose words are they, that say, "Without holiness none shall see God?" and that "He that is in Christ, is a new creature," and such like passages which offend you. Are they ours, or are they God's? Did we indite the Holy Scriptures, or did the Holy Ghost? Is it hard of us, if there be any words there that cross your flesh, and that you call bitter? Can we help it, if God will save none but sanctified believers? If you have any thing to say against it, you must say it to him: we are sure that this is in his word: and we are sure he cannot lie: and, therefore, we are sure it is true. We are sure that he may do with his own as he list, and that he oweth you nothing, and that he may give his pardon and salvation to whom, and upon what terms he please: and, therefore, we are sure he doth you no wrong. But if you think otherwise, reproach not us that are but messengers; but prepare your charge, and make it good against your Maker, if you dare and can. You shall shortly come before him, and be put to it to justify yourselves: if you can do it by recrimination, and can prevent your condemnation, by condemning the law and the Judge, try your strength and do your worst.

Ah, poor worms! dare you lift up the head, and

move a tongue against the Lord ! Did Infinite Wisdom itself want wisdom, to make a law to rule the world ? And did Infinite Goodness want goodness to deal mercifully, and as was best with man ! And shall Justice itself be judged to be unjust ? and that by you ! by such silly, ignorant, and unrighteous ones as you ! as if you had the wisdom and goodness, which you think God wanted when he made his laws !

And whereas you tell us of preaching terribly to you, we cannot help it, if the true and righteous threatenings of God be terrible to the guilty. It is because we know the terrors of the Lord, that we preach them, to warn you to prevent them. And so did the apostles before us. Either it is true that the unquenchable fire will be the portion of impenitent, unbelieving, fleshly, worldly, unsanctified men, or it is not true. If it were not true, the word of God were not true : and, then, what should you do with any preaching at all, or any religion ! But if you confess it to be true, do you think in reason it should be silenced ? Or, can we tell men of so terrible a thing as hell, and tell them that it will certainly be their lot, unless they be new creatures, and not speak terribly to them ! O, sirs, it is the wonder of my soul that it seemeth no more terrible, to all the ungodly, that think they do believe it. Yea, and I would it did seem more terrible, that it might affright you from your sin to God, and you might be saved. If you were running ignorantly into a coal-pit, would you revile him that told you of it, and bid you stop if you love your life ! would you tell him that he speaks bitterly or terribly to you ?

It is not the preacher that is the cause of your danger: he doth but tell you of it, that you may escape. If you are saved, you may thank him: but if you are lost, you may thank yourselves. It is you that deal bitterly and terribly with yourselves. Telling you of hell doth not make hell: warning you of it, is not causing it: nor is it God that is unmerciful, but you are foolishly cruel and unmerciful to yourselves. Do not think to despise the patience and mercy of the Lord, and then think to escape, by accusing him of being unmerciful, and by saying, it is a terrible doctrine that we preach to you, impenitent sinners! I confess to thee it is terrible, and more terrible than thy senseless heart imagineth. One day, if grace prevent it not, thou shalt find it ten thousand times more terrible than thou canst apprehend it now. When thou seest thy Judge, with millions of his angels, coming to condemn thee, thou wilt then say his laws are terrible indeed. Thou hast to do with a holy, jealous God, who is a “consuming fire;” and can such a God be despised, and not be terrible to thee? He is called, “The great, the mighty, and the terrible God.” “With God is terrible majesty.” “He is terrible out of his holy place.” “He is terrible to the greatest, even to the kings of the earth.” It is time for you, therefore, to tremble and submit, and think how unable you are to contend with him: and not revile his word or works, because they are terrible; but fear him for them, and study them on purpose that you may fear and glorify him. And as David, “Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! Through the greatness of thy power

shall thy enemies submit themselves unto thee—Come and see the works of the Lord! He is terrible in his doings towards the children of men.” “Let them praise thy great and terrible name, for it is holy.” And will you reproach God, or his word, or works, or ministers, with that which is the matter of his praise? If it be terrible to hear of the wrath of God, how terrible will it be to feel it? Choose not a state of terror to yourselves, and preaching will be less terrible to you. Yield to the sanctifying work of Christ, and receive his Spirit: and then that which is terrible to others will be comfortable to you. What terror is it to the regenerate (that knoweth himself to be such), to hear that none but the regenerate shall be saved? What terror is it to them that mind the things of the Spirit, to hear of the misery of a fleshly mind, and that they that live after the flesh shall die? The word of God is full of terror to the ungodly: but return with all your hearts to God, and then what word of God speaks terror to you? Truly, sirs, it is more in your power than ours, to make our preaching easy and less terrible to you! We cannot change our doctrine, but you may change your state and lives: we cannot preach another Gospel, but you may obey the Gospel which we preach. Obey it, and it will be the most comfortable word to you in the world. We cannot make void the word of God, but you may avoid the stroke by penitent submission. Do you think it fitter to change our Master’s word, and falsify the laws of God Almighty, or for you to change your crooked courses, which are condemned by his word, and to let go the sin which the law

forbiddeth? It is you that must change and not the law. It is you that must be conformed to it, and not the rule that must be made crooked to conform to you.

Say not as Ahab of Michaiah, of the minister: "I hate him, for he prophesieth not good of me, but evil;" for a Balaam could profess, that if the king "would give him his house full of silver and gold, he could not go beyond the word of the Lord his God, to do less or more," or "to do either good or bad of his own mind." What good would it do you for a preacher to tell you a lie, and say that you may be pardoned and saved in an impenitent, unsanctified state? Do you think our saying so, would make it so? Will God falsify his word to make good ours? Or would he not deal with us as perfidious messengers that had betrayed our trust, and belied him, and deceived your souls? And would it save an unregenerate man to have Christ condemn the minister for deceiving him, and telling him that he may be saved in such a state?

Do but let go the odious sin that the word of God doth speak so ill of, and then it will speak no ill of you.

Alas, sirs, what would you have a poor minister do, when God's command doth cross your pleasure; and when he is sure to offend either God or you? Which should he venture to offend? If he help not the ungodly to know their misery, he offendeth God: if he do it he offendeth them. If he tell you, that "All they shall be damned that believe not the truth, that have pleasure in unrighteousness," your hearts rise against him for talking of damnation to

you: and yet it is but the words of the Holy Ghost, which we are bound to preach! If he tell you that “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die,” you will be angry, and if he do not tell you so, God will be angry; for it is his express determination. And whose anger, think you, should a wise man choose; or whose should he most resolutely avoid—the anger of the dreadful God of heaven, or yours? Your anger we can bear; but his anger is intolerable. When you have railed, and slandered us and our doctrine, we can live yet; or if you kill the body you can do no more: you do but send us before, to be witnesses against you, when you come to judgment. But who can live, when God will pour out wrath upon him? We may keep your slanders and indignation from our hearts; but it is the heart that the heart-searching God contendeth with: and who can heal the heart which he will break? You may reach the flesh; but he that is a Spirit can afflict and wound the spirit: “And a wounded spirit who can bear?” Would you not yourselves say he were worse than mad, that would rather abuse the eternal God, than cross the misguided desires of such worms as you; that would displease God to please you, and sell his love to purchase yours? Will you be instead of God to us, when we have lost his favour? Will you save us from him, whom he sendeth for our souls by death, or senteneeth us to hell by judgment? Silly souls! how happy were you, could you save yourselves! Will you be our gods if we forsake our God? Blame not God to use them as enemies and rebels, that will change him for such earthen gods as you. We have one God, and but

one, and he must be obeyed, whether you like or dislike it: "There is one Lawgiver that is able to save and destroy," and he must be pleased, whether it please your carnal minds or not. If your wisdom now will take the chair, and judge the preaching of the Gospel to be foolishness, or the searching application of it to be too much harshness and severity, I am sure you shall come down ere long, and hear his sentence that will convince you, that the "wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, and the foolishness of God (as blasphemy dare call it) is wiser than men." And God will be the final Judge, and his word shall stand when you have done your worst. The worst that the serpent can do, is but to hiss awhile and put forth the sting, and bruise our heel; but God's day will be the bruising of his head, and "Satan shall be bruised under feet."

The sun will shine, and the light thereof discover your deformities, whether you will or not. And if adulterers or thieves, that love the works of darkness, will do their worst by force or flattery, they cannot make it cease its shining, though they may shut their eyes, or hide themselves in darkness from its light. Faithful teachers are the "lights of the world." They are not lighted by the Holy Ghost, to be "put under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they may give light to all that are in the house." What would you do with teachers but to teach you? and what should they make known to you, if not yourselves?

Verily, sirs, a sinner under the curse of the law, unsanctified and unpardoned, is not in a state to be jested and dallied with, unless you can play in the

flames of hell: it is plain dealing that he needs. A quibbling, flashy sermon, is not the proper medicine for a lethargic, miserable soul, nor fit to break a stony heart, nor to bind up a heart that is kindly broken. Heaven and hell should not be talked of in a eanting, or pedantic strain. A Seneca can tell you, that it is a physieian that is skilful, and not one that is eloquent, that we need. It is a cure that we need; and the means are best, be they ever so sharp, that will aecomplish it. Serious, reverend gravity, best suiteth with matters of such incomprehensible concern. You may play with words when the case will bear it: but as dropping of beads is too ludicrous for one that is praying to be saved from the flames of hell; so a sleepy, or a histrionical speech, is too light and unlikely a means to call back a sinner that is posting to perdition, and must be humbled and renewed by the Spirit, or be for ever damned. This is your case, sirs: and do you think the playing of a part upon a stage doth fit your case? O, no! So great a business requireth all the serious earnestness in the speaker that he can use. I am sure you will think so, ere long, yourselves; and you will then think well of the preachers that faithfully acquainted you with your case: and (if they succeed to your perdition) you will curse those that smoothed you up in your presumption, and hid your danger, by false doctrine, or misapplication. God can make use of clay and spittle to open the eyes of men born blind; and of rams-horns to bring down the walls of Jericho: but usually he fitteth the means to the end, and works on man agreeably to his nature: and therefore, if a

blind understanding must be enlightened, you cannot expect that it should be done by glow-worms, but by bringing into your souls the powerful celestial truth, which shall show you the hidden corners of your hearts, and the hidden mysteries of the Gospel, and the unseen things of the other world. If a hardened heart be to be broken, it is not stroking, but striking that must do it. It is not the sounding brass, the tinkling cymbal, the carnal mind puffed up with superficial knowledge, that is the instrument fitted to the renewing of men's souls: but it is he that can acquaint you with what he himself hath been savingly acquainted. The heart is not melted into godly sorrow, nor raised to the life of faith and love, by a game at words, or useless notions, but by the illuminating beams of sacred truth, and the attraction of Divine displayed goodness, communicated from a mind that by faith hath seen the glory of God, and by experience found that he is good, and that liveth in the love of God: such a one is fitted to assist you, first in the knowledge of yourselves, and then in the knowledge of God in Christ.

Did you consider what is the office of the ministry, you would soon know what ministers do most faithfully perform their office, and what kind of teaching and oversight you should desire: and then you would be reconciled to the light: and would choose the teacher (could you have your choice) that would do most to help you to know yourselves, and know the Lord.

I beseech you judge of our work by our commission, and judge of it by your own necessities. Have you more need to be acquainted with your sin

and danger? or to be pleased with a set of handsome words, which, when they are said, do leave you as they found you; and leave no light, and life, and heavenly love upon your hearts: that have no substance that you can feed upon in the review?

And what our commission is you may find in many places of the Scripture: "When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand: yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul:" and "If thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned, also thou hast delivered thy soul."

And what if they distaste our doctrine, must we forbear? "Tell them, thus saith the Lord God, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." So Ezek. xxxiii. 1—10.

You know what became of Jonah for refusing to deliver God's threatenings against Nineveh.

Christ's stewards must give to each his portion. He himself threateneth damnation to the impenitent, the hypocrites, and unbelievers, (Luke xiii. 3, 5. Mark xvi. 16. Matt. xxiv. 51.) Paul saith of himself, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." Patience and meekness is commanded to the ministers of Christ, even in the instructing of opposers, but to what end, but "that they may escape out of the snare of the devil,

who are taken captive by him at his will?" So that, with all our meekness, we must be so plain with you as to make you know that you are Satan's captives, taken alive by him in his snares, till God, by giving you repentance, shall recover you.

The very office of the preachers sent by Christ was "to open men's eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins, and inheritance with the sanctified by faith in Christ;" which telleth you, that we must let men understand, that till they are converted and sanctified, they are blind, and in the power of Satan, far from God; unpardoned, and having no part in the inheritance of saints.

Christ tells the Pharisees, that they were of their father the devil, when they boasted that God was their Father. And how plainly he tells them of their hypocrisy, and asked them how they escape the damnation of hell, you may see in Matt. xxiii.

Paul thought it his duty to tell Elymas, that he "was full of all subtlety and mischief, the child of the devil, and the enemy of all righteousness, a perverter of the right ways of the Lord." And Peter thought meet to tell Simon Magus, that he had "neither part nor lot in that matter: that his heart was not right in the sight of God;" that he was in "the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity."

The charge of Paul to Timothy is plain and urgent, "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove,

rebuke, exhort." And to Titus, " Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith."

Judge now, whether ministers must deal plainly or deceitfully with you, and whether it be the searching, healing truth that they must bring you, or a smooth tale that hath no salt or savour in it. And would you have us break these laws of God, for nothing but to deceive you and tell you a lie, and make the ungodly believe that he is godly, or to hide the truth that is necessary to your salvation? Is the knowledge of yourselves so intolerable a thing to you?

Beloved, either it is true that you are yet unsanctified, or it is not. If it be not, it is none of our desire you should think so: but if it be true, tell me, why would you not know it? I hope it is not because you would not be tormented before the time. I hope you think not that we delight to vex men's consciences with fear, or to see men live in grief and trouble, rather than in well-grounded peace and joy. And if indeed you are yet unregenerate, that is not severe in us that tell you of it, but of yourselves that wilfully continue it. Do we make you ungodly, by telling you of your ungodliness? Is it we that hinder the forgiveness of your sins, by letting you know that they are not forgiven? O no! we strive for your conversion, to this end that your sins may be forgiven; and you hinder the forgiveness of them, by refusing to be converted. When God forsaketh stubborn souls for resisting his grace, note how he expresseth his severity against them: "That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should

be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." You see here, that till they are converted, men's sins are not forgiven them; and that whoever procureth the forgiveness of their sins, must do it by procuring their conversion; and that the hindering of their conversion is the hindering of their forgiveness; and that blindness of mind is the great hinderance of conversion. And therefore, undoubtedly, the teacher that brings light into your minds, and first showeth you yourselves, and your unconverted, unpardoned state, is he that takes the way to your conversion and forgiveness: as the forecited text showeth you, "I send thee to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, (that they may first know themselves, and then know God in Jesus Christ,) and from the power of Satan (who ruled them as their prince, and captivated them as their gaoler) unto God, (whom they had forsaken as a guide and governor, and were deprived of as their protector, portion, and felicity,) that they may receive forgiveness of sins, (which none receive but the converted,) and an inheritance among them that are sanctified;" for glory is the inheritance of the saints alone; and all this "through faith that is in me," (by believing in me, and giving up themselves unto me, that by my satisfaction, merits, teaching, Spirit, intercession, and judgment, it may be accomplished).

Truly, sirs, if we knew how to procure your conversion and forgiveness, without making you know that you are unconverted and unpardoned, we would do it, and not trouble you needlessly with so sad a discovery. Let that man be accounted unworthy to be a preacher of the gospel, that envieth you your

peace and comfort. We would not have you think one jot worse of your condition than it is. Know but the very truth, what case you are in, and we desire no more.

And so far are we, by this, from driving you to desperation, that it is your desperation that we would prevent by it; which can no other way be prevented. When you are past remedy, desperation cannot be avoided; and this is necessary to your remedy. There is a conditional despair, and an absolute despair. The former is necessary to prevent the latter, and to bring you to a state of hope. A man that hath a gangrened foot may despair of life, unless it be cut off; that so, by the cure, he may not be left to an absolute despair of life. So you must despair of being pardoned or saved without conversion, that you may be converted, and so have hope of your salvation, and be saved from final, absolute despair. I hope you will not be offended with him, that would persuade you to despair of living, unless you will eat and drink. You have no more reason to be offended with him that would have you despair of being pardoned or saved without Christ, or without his sanctifying Spirit.

Having said so much of the necessity of ministers endeavouring to make unregenerate sinners know themselves, I shall next try what I can do towards it, with those that hear, by proposing these few questions to your consideration:—

Quest. 1. Do you think that you were ever unsanctified, and in a state of wrath and condemnation, or not? If not, then you are not the offspring of

Adam; you are not then of the human race: for the Scripture telleth you, that “we are conceived in sin;” and that “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;” and that “by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation;” and that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;” and “the wages of sin is death.”

And I hope you will confess, that you cannot be pardoned and saved without a Saviour; and therefore, as you need a Saviour, so you must have a special interest in him. It is as certain that Christ saveth not all, as that he saveth any; for the same word assureth us of the one and of the other.

Quest. 2. But if you confess that once you were children of wrath, my next question is, Whether you know how, and when, you were delivered from so sad a state? or at least, whether it be done, or not? Perhaps you will say, it was done in your baptism, which washeth away original sin. But, granting you that all that have a promise of pardon before, have that promise sealed, and that pardon delivered them by baptism, I ask,

Quest. 3. Do you think that baptism by water alone will save, unless you be also baptized by the Spirit? Christ telleth you the contrary, with a vehement asseveration: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” And Peter tells you, that it is “not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good

conscience towards God.” “ If therefore you have not the Spirit of Christ,” for all your baptism, “ you are none of his;” for “ that which is born of the flesh is (but) flesh,” and you must be born of the Spirit if you will be spiritual.

I shall further grant you, that many receive the Spirit of Christ even in their infancy, and may be savingly, as well as sacramentally, then regenerate. And if this be your case, you have a very great cause to be thankful for it. But I next inquire of you,

Quest. 4. Have you not lived an unholy, carnal life, since you came to the use of reason? Have you not since then declared, that you did not live the life of faith, nor walk after the Spirit, but after the flesh? If so, then it is certain that you have need of a conversion from that ungodly state, whatever baptism did for you; and therefore you are still to inquire, whether you have been converted since you came to age.

And I must needs remind you, that your infant covenant made in baptism, being upon your parents’ faith and consent, and not your own, will serve your turn no longer than your infancy, unless when you come to the use of reason, you renew and own that covenant yourselves, and have a personal faith and repentance of your own. And whatever you received in baptism, this must be our next inquiry.

Quest. 5. Did you ever, since you came to age, upon sound repentance, and renunciation of the flesh, the world, and the devil, give up yourselves unfeignedly, by faith, to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and show, by the performance of this holy

covenant, that you were sincere in the making of it? I confess it is a matter so hard to most, to assign the time and manner of their conversion, that I think it no safe way of trial. And therefore I will issue all in this one question :

Quest. 6. Have you the necessary parts of the new creature now; though perhaps you know not just when, or how it was formed in you? The question is, whether you are now in a state of sanctification? And not, whether you can tell just when you did receive it? It beginneth so early with some, and so obscurely with others, and in others the preparations are so long or notable, that it is hard to say when special grace came in. But you may well discern whether it be there or not. And that is the question that must be resolved, if you would know yourselves.

And, though I have been long in these exhortations, to incline your wills, I shall be short in giving you those evidences of the holy life, which must be before your eyes while you are upon the trial. In sum, if your very hearts do now unfeignedly consent to the covenant which you made in baptism, and your lives express it to be a true consent, I dare say you are regenerate, though you know not just when you first consented. Come on, then, and let us inquire what you say to the several parts of your baptismal covenant.

1. If you are sincere in the covenant you have made with Christ, you do resolvedly consent, that God shall be your only God, as reconciled to you by Jesus Christ. Which is, 1. That you will take him for your Owner, or your absolute Lord, and give

up yourselves to him as his own. 2. That you will take him for your supreme Governor, and consent to be subject to his government and laws, taking his wisdom for your guide, and his will for the rule of your wills and lives. 3. That you will take him for your chiefest Benefactor, from whom you receive and expect all your happiness, and to whom you owe yourselves and all, by way of thankfulness; and that you take his love and favour for your happiness itself, and prefer the everlasting enjoyment of his glorious sight and love in heaven, before all the sensual pleasures of the world. I would prove the necessity of all these by Scripture as we go, but that it is evident in itself; these three relations being essential to God, as our God in covenant. He is not our God, if not our Owner, Ruler, and Benefactor. You profess all this, when you profess but to love God, or to take him for your God.

2. In the covenant of baptism you do profess to believe in Christ, and take him for your only Saviour. If you do this in sincerity, 1. You do unfeignedly believe the doctrines of his Gospel, the articles of the Christian faith, concerning his person, his offices, and his sufferings and works. 2. You do take him unfeignedly for the only Redeemer and Saviour of mankind, and give up yourselves to be saved by his merits, righteousness, intercession, &c. as he hath promised in his word. 3. You trust upon him and his promises, for the attainment of your reconciliation and peace with God, your justification, adoption, sanctification, and the glory of the life to come. 4. You take him for your Lord and King, your Owner and Ruler, by the right of redemption; and

your grand Benefactor, that hath obliged you to love and gratitude, by saving you from the wrath to come, and purchasing eternal glory for you by his most wonderful condescension, life, and sufferings.

3. In the baptismal covenant, you are engaged to the Holy Ghost. If you are sincere in this branch of your covenant, 1. You discern your sins as odious and dangerous, as the corruption of your souls, and that which displeaseth the most holy God. 2. You see an excellency in holiness of heart and life, as the image of God, the rectitude of man, and that which fits him for eternal blessedness, and maketh him amiable in the eyes of God. 3. You unfeignedly desire to be rid of your sin, how dear soever it hath been to you, and to be perfectly sanctified by the Holy Spirit, in the use of the means which he hath appointed; and you consent that the Holy Ghost, as your Sanctifier, do purify you, and kindle the love of God in you, and bring it to perfection.

4. In baptism, you profess to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil; that is, as they stand for your hearts against the will and love of God, and against the happiness of the unseen world, and against your faith in Christ your Saviour, and against the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost. If therefore you are sincere in this part of your covenant, you do, upon deliberation, perceive all the pleasures, profits, and honours of this world, to be so vain and worthless, that you are habitually resolved to prefer the love and favour of God, and your salvation, before them; and to be ruled by Jesus Christ, and his Spirit and word, rather than by the desires of the flesh, or the world's allurements,

or the will of man, or the suggestions of the devil; and to forsake all rather than forsake the Father, the Saviour, the Sanctifier, to whom you are devoted, and the everlasting life, which, upon his promise, you have taken for your hope and portion. This is the sense of baptism, and all this in profession being essential to your baptism, must be essential to your Christianity. Your parents' profession of it was necessary to your infant title to the outward privileges of the church. Your own personal profession is necessary to your continuance of those privileges, and your visible Christianity and communion with the adult. And the truth of what you profess, is necessary to your real Christianity before God, and to your title to salvation; and this is what is to be now inquired after. You cannot hope to be admitted into heaven upon lower terms than the sincerity of that profession which entereth you into the church; while we tell you of no higher matters necessary to your salvation, than the sincerity of that which is necessary to baptism and Christianity. I hope you will not say we deal too strictly with you. Inquire now, by a diligent trial of your hearts, whether you truly consent to all these articles of your baptismal vow or covenant. If you do, you are regenerate by the Spirit: if you do not, you have but the sacrament of regeneration; which aggravateth your guilt, as a violated profession and covenant must needs do. And I do not think, that any man worthy to be discoursed with, will have the face to tell you, that any man, at the use of reason, is, by his baptism, or any thing else, in a state of justification and salvation, whose heart doth not sincerely consent to the cove-

nant of baptism, and whose life expresth not that consent.

Hence, therefore, you may perceive that it is a thing unquestionable, that all these persons are yet unregenerate, and in the bond of their iniquity.

I. All those that have not unfeignedly devoted themselves to God, as being not their own, but his. His by the title of creation: "Know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves: we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." And his by the title of redemption: for "we are bought with a price." And he that unfeignedly taketh God for his Owner, and absolute Lord, will heartily give up himself unto him; as Paul saith of the Corinthians, "They first gave up their own selves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God."

And he that entirely giveth up himself to God, doth, with himself, surrender all that he hath in desire and resolution. As Christ, with himself, doth "give us all things," and "addeth other things to them that seek first his kingdom and its righteousness," so Christians, with themselves, do give up all they have to Christ.

And he that giveth up himself to God, will live to God: and he that taketh not himself to be his own, will take nothing for his own; but will study the interest of his Lord, and think he is best disposed of, when he honoureth him most, and serveth him best. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

If any of you devote not yourselves unfeignedly

to God, and make it not your first inquiry, what God would have you be and do, but live to yourselves, and yet think yourselves in a state of grace, you are mistaken, and do not know yourselves. How many might easily see their miserable condition in this discovery, who say in effect, "Our lips are our own: who is Lord over us!" and rather hate and oppose the interest of God and holiness in the world, than devote themselves to the promoting of it! "Do ye thus requite the Lord, ye foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and established thee?"

2. All those are unregenerate, and in a state of death, that are not sincerely subjected to the governing will of God, but are ruled by their carnal interest and desires; and the word of a man that can gratify or hurt them, can do more with them than the word of God. To show them the command of a man that they think can undo them if they disobey, doth more prevail with them, than to show them the command of God, that can condemn them to endless misery. They more fear men, that can kill the body, than God, that can destroy both soul and body in hell-fire. When the lust of the flesh, and the will of man, do bear more sway than the will of God, it is certain that such a soul is unregenerate. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life—Knowing this, that our

old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed; that henceforth we should not serve sin.—Know ye not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” “Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin: that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”

3. All those are unregenerate, that depend not upon God as their chief benefactor; and do not most carefully apply themselves to him, as knowing that “in his favour is life,” and that “his loving-kindness is better than life,” and that to his judgment we must finally stand or fall: but do ambitiously seek the favour of men, and call them their benefactors, whatever become of the favour of God. He is no child of God, that preferreth not the love of God before the love of all the world. He is no heir of heaven, that preferreth not the fruition of God in heaven, before all worldly glory and felicity. “If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.” The love of God is the sum of holiness; the heart of the new creature; the perfecting of it is the perfection and felicity of man.

4. They are certainly unregenerate, that believe not the Gospel, and take not Christ for their only Saviour, and his promises of grace and glory, as

purchased by his sacrifice and merits, for the foundation of their hopes, on which they resolve to trust their souls for pardon and peace with God, and endless happiness. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” “This is the record, that God has given us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life.”

When our happiness was in Adam’s hands, he lost it: it is now put into safer hands, and Jesus Christ, the second Adam, is become our treasury. He is the head of the body, from whom each member hath quickening influence. The life of saints is in him, as the life of the tree is in the root, unseen. Holiness is a living unto God in Christ; though we are dead with Christ, to the law, and to the world, and to the flesh, we are alive to God. So Paul describeth our case in his own, “I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” “Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” “Christ is the vine, and we are the branches; without him we can do nothing. If you abide not in him, and his words in you, you are cast forth as a branch, and withered, which men gather and cast into the fire, and they are burned.” In baptism you are married unto

Christ, as to the external solemnization ; and in spiritual regeneration, your hearts do inwardly close with him, entertain him, and resign themselves unto him by faith and love ; and by a resolved covenant become his own.

5. That person is certainly unregenerate, that never was convinced of a necessity of sanctification, or never perceived an excellency and amiableness in holiness of heart and life, and loved it in others, and desired it himself ; and never gave up himself to the Holy Ghost, to be further sanctified in the use of his appointed means ; desiring to be perfect, and willing to press forward towards the mark, and to abound in grace. Much less is that person renewed by the Holy Ghost, that hateth holiness, and had rather be without it, and would not walk in the fear and obedience of the Lord.

The spirit of holiness is that life by which Christ quickeneth all that are his members. He is no member of Christ that is without it. “According to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

6. That person is unregenerate, that is under the dominion of his fleshly desires, “and mindeth the things of the flesh above the things of the Spirit,” and hath not mortified it so far, as not to live according to it. A carnal mind, and a carnal life, are opposite to holiness, as sickness is to health, and darkness to light. “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.—For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh ; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the

Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. —For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.”

7. Lastly, That person is certainly unregenerate, that so far valueth and loveth the world, or any of the carnal accommodations therein, as practically to prefer them before the love of God, and the hopes of everlasting glory: seeking it first with highest estimation, and holding it fastest; so as that he will rather venture his soul upon the threatened wrath of God, than his body upon the wrath of man; and will be religious, no further than may consist with his prosperity or safety in the world, and hath something that he cannot part with for Christ and heaven, because it is dearer to him than they. Let this man go ever so far in religion, as long as he goeth further for the world, and setteth it nearest to

his heart, and will do most for it, and, consequently, loveth it better than Christ, he is no true Christian, nor in a state of grace.

The Scriptures put this also out of doubt, as you may see, Matt. x. 37, 38. Luke xiv. 25, 27, 33. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me, &c. Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."—"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." No wonder, then, if the world must be renounced in our baptism. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

You see, by this time, what it is to be regenerate, and to be a Christian indeed, by what is contained even in our baptism: and, consequently, how you may know yourselves, whether you are sanctified, and the heirs of heaven, or not.

Again, therefore, I summon you to appear before your consciences. And if indeed these evidences of regeneration are not in you, stop not the sentence, but confess your sinful, miserable state, and condemn yourselves; and say no longer, I hope yet that my present condition may serve the turn, and that God will forgive me, though I should die without any further change. Those hopes, that you may be saved without regeneration, or that you are regenerate when you are not, are the pillars of Satan's fortress in your hearts, and keep you from the saving hopes of the regenerate, that will never make you ashamed.

Uphold not that which Christ is engaged against: down it must, either by grace or judgment: and, therefore, abuse not your souls, by under-propping such an ill-grounded, false, deceitful hope. You have now time to take it down so orderly and safely, as that it fall not on your heads, and overwhelm you not for ever. But if you stay till death shall undermine it, the fall will be great, and your ruin irreparable. If you are wise, therefore, know yourselves in time.



CHAPTER VII.

Exhortations to the Godly, to know their sins and wants.

II. I HAVE done with that part of my special exhortation which concerned the unregenerate: I am next to speak to those of you, that by grace are brought into a better state; and to tell you, that it very much concerneth you also, even the best of you, to labour to be well acquainted with yourselves: and that, both in respect of, I. Your sins and wants; and, II. Your graces and your duties.

I. Be acquainted with the root and remnant of your sins: with your particular inclinations and corrupt affections; their quality, their degree, and strength: with the weaknesses of every grace; with your disability to duty; and with the omissions or sinful practices of your lives. Search diligently and deeply; frequently and accurately peruse your hearts and ways, till you certainly and thoroughly know yourselves.

And I beseech you, let it not suffice you that you know your states, and have found yourselves in the love of God, in the faith of Christ, and possessed by his Spirit. Though this be a mercy worth many worlds, yet this is not all concerning yourselves that you have to know. If yet you say that you have no sin, you deceive yourselves. If yet you think you are past all danger, your danger is the greater for this mistake. As much as you have been humbled for sin; as much as you have loathed it; as often as you have confessed it, lamented it, complained and prayed against it, yet it is alive: though it be mortified, it is alive. It is said to be mortified as to the prevalency and reign, but the relics of it yet survive: were it perfectly dead, you were perfectly delivered from it, and might say, you have no sin: but it is not yet so happy with you. It will find work for the blood and Spirit of Christ, and for yourselves, as long as you are in the flesh. And, alas! too many that know themselves to be upright in the main, are yet so much unacquainted with their hearts and lives, as to the degrees of grace and sin, as that it much disadvantage them in their Christian progress. Go along with me in the careful observation of these following evils, that may befall even the regenerate by the remnants of self-ignorance.

1. The work of mortification is very much hindered, because you know yourselves no better, as may appear in all these following discoveries.

(1.) You confess not sin to God or man so penitently and sensibly as you ought, because you know yourselves no better. Did you see your heart, with a fuller view, how heavily would you charge your-

selves ! repentance would be more intense and more effectual ; and when you were more contrite, you would be more meet for the sense of pardon, and for God's delight. It would fill you more with godly shame and self-abhorrence, if you better knew yourselves. It would make you more sensibly say, with Paul, " I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? " And with David, " I will declare my iniquity ; I will be sorry for my sin. They are more than the hairs of my head. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.") Repentance is the death of sin ; and the knowledge of ourselves, and the sight of our sins, is the life of repentance. /

(2.) You pray not against sin, for grace and pardon, so earnestly as you should, because you know yourselves no better. O that God would but open these too close hearts, and show us all the recesses of our self-deceit, and the filth of worldliness, and carnal inclinations that lurk within us, and read us a lecture upon every part ; what prayers would it teach us to indite ! That you may not be proud of your holiness, let me tell you, Christians, that a full display of the corruptions of the best of you, would not only take down self-exalting thoughts, that you be not lifted up above measure, but would teach you to pray with fervour and importunity, and make you cry, " O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver

me!" If the sight of a cripple, or naked person, move you to compassion, though they use no words, surely the sight of your own deformities, wants, and dangers, would affect you if you saw them as they are. How many a sin do you forget in your confessions, that should have a particular repentance! And how many wants do you overlook in prayers, that should have particular petitions for a merciful supply! And how many are run over with words of course, that would be earnestly insisted on, if you did but better know yourselves! O that God would persuade you better to study your hearts, and pray out of that book whenever you draw nigh to him, that you might not be so like the hypocrites, that draw near to him with the lips, when their hearts are far from him. To my shame I must confess, that my soul is too dry and barren in holy supplications to God, and too little affected with my confessed sins and wants; but I am forced to lay all, in a very great measure, upon the imperfect acquaintance that I have at home. I cannot think I should want matter to pour out before the Lord in confession and petition, nor so much want fervour and earnestness with God, if my heart and life lay open to my view, while I am upon my knees.

(3.) It is for want of a fuller knowledge of yourselves, that you are so negligent in your Christian watch—that you do not better guard your senses—that you make no stricter a covenant with your eyes, your appetites, your tongues—that you no more examine what you think, affect, and say—that you call not yourselves more frequently to account: but days run on, and duties are carelessly performed, as of

course, and no daily reckoning made to conscience of all. The knowledge of your weaknesses, and readiness to yield, and of your treacherous corruptions that comply with the enemy, would make you more suspicious of yourselves, and to walk more "circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise," and to consider your ways, before you were too bold and venturous. It was the consciousness of their own infirmity, that should have moved the disciples to watch and pray. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And all have the same charge, because all have the same infirmity and danger. "What I say to you, I say unto all, Watch." Did we better know how many advantages our own corruptions give the tempter, that charge of the Holy Ghost would awake us all to stand to our arms, and look about us: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith; quit you like men, be strong." "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

The knowledge of ourselves doth show us all the advantages of the tempter; what he hath to work upon, and what in us to take his part, and consequently where he is most likely to assault us: and so puts us into so prepared a posture for defence, as very much hindereth his success. But so far as we do not know ourselves, we are like blind men in fencing, the adversary may hit in what part he

please. What sin may not Satan tempt a man into, that is not acquainted with the corruptions and frailties of his own heart!

(4.) It is for want of self-acquaintance that we seek not for help against our sin, to ministers or other friends that could assist us: and that we use the confirming ordinances with no more care and diligence. All the abilities and willingness of others, and all the helps of God's appointment, will be neglected, when we should employ them against our sins, so far as self-ignorance doth keep us from discerning the necessity of them.

(5.) It is for want of a fuller knowledge of ourselves, that many lie long in sins unobserved by themselves; and many are on the declining hand, and take no notice of it. And how little resistance or mortifying endeavours we are likely to bestow upon unknown or unobserved sins, is easy to conceive. How many may we observe to have notable blemishes of pride, ostentation, desire of pre-eminence and esteem, envy, malice, self-conceitedness, self-seeking, censoriousness, uncharitableness, and such like, that see no more of it in themselves, than is in more mortified men! How ordinarily do we hear the pastors that watch over them, and their friends that are best acquainted with them, lamenting the miscarriages, and the careless walking and declining of many that seem religious, when they lament it not themselves, nor will be convinced that they are sick of any such disease, any more than all other Christians are! Hence it is, that we have all need to lament, in general, our unknown sins, and say, with David, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

There are few of us that observe our hearts at all, but find, both upon any special illumination, and in the hour of discovering trials, that there were many distempers in our hearts, and many miscarriages in our lives, that we never took notice of before. The heart hath such secret corners of uncleanness, such mysteries of iniquity, and depths of deceitfulness, that many fearing God, are strangely unacquainted with themselves, as to the particular motions and degrees of sin, till some notable providence, or gracious light, assist them in the discovery. I think it not unprofitable here to give you some instances of sin, undiscerned by the servants of the Lord themselves that have it, till the light come in that makes them wonder at their former darkness.

In general, first observe these two. 1. The secret habits of sin, being discernible only by some acts, are many times unknown to us, because we are under no strong temptation to commit those sins. And it is a wonderfully hard thing for a man that hath little or no temptation to know himself, and know what he should do, if he had the temptations of other men. And O, what sad discoveries are made in the hour of temptation! What swarms of vice break out in some, like vermin, that lay hid in the cold of winter, and crawl about when they feel the summer's heat! What horrid corruptions, which we never observed in ourselves before, do show themselves in the hour of temptation! Who would have thought that righteous Noah had, in the ark, such a heart as would, by carelessness, fall into the sin of drunkenness! Or that righteous Lot had carried from Sodom the seed of drunken-

ness and incest in him ! Or that David, a man so eminent in holiness, and a man after God's own heart, had a heart that had in it the seeds of adultery and murder ! Little thought Peter, when he professed Christ, that there had been in him such carnality and unbelief, as would so soon have provoked Christ to say, " Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me ; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." And little did he think, when he so vehemently professed his resolution rather to die with Christ than deny him, that there had been then in his heart, the seed that would bring forth this bitter fruit. / Who knows what is virtually in a seed, that never saw the tree, or tasted of the fruit? /

Especially, when we have not only a freedom from temptations, but also the most powerful means to keep under vicious habits, it is hard to know how far they are mortified at the root. When men are among those that countenance the contrary virtue, and where the vice is in disgrace, and where examples of piety and temperance are still before their eyes ; if they dwell in such places and company, where authority, and friendship, and reason, do all take part with good, and cry down the evil, no wonder if the evil that is unmortified in men's hearts, do not much break out to their own or others' observations, through all this opposition. The instance of King Joash is famous for this, who " did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, all the days of Jehoiada the priest that instructed him," but " after his death, when the princes of Judah flattered him with their obeisance, he left the

house of God and served idols, till wrath came upon the land:" and was so hardened in sin, as to murder Zechariah, the prophet of God, and son of that Jehoiada that had brought him out of obscurity, and set him upon the throne, even because he spake, in the name of the Lord, against his sin. Who would have thought that it had been in the heart of Solomon, a man so wise, so holy, and so solemnly engaged to God, by his public professions and works, to have committed the abominations mentioned, 1 Kings xi. 4.?

If you say, 'That all this proveth not that there was any seed or root of such a sin in the heart before, but only that the temptation did prevail to cause the acts first, and then such habits as those acts did tend to.' I answer, 1. I grant that temptations do not only discover what is in the heart, but also make it worse when they prevail; and that is no full proof that a man had a proper habit of sin before, because, by temptation, he commits the act: for Adam sinned by temptation, without an antecedent habit. 2. But we know the nature of man to be now corrupted, and that this corruption is virtually or seminally all sin, disposing us to all; and that this disposition is strong enough to be called a general habit. When grace in the sanctified is called a nature, there is the same reason to call the sinful inclination a nature too; which can signify nothing else than a strong and rooted inclination. Knowing, therefore, that the heart is so corrupted, we may well say, when the evil fruit appears, that there was the seed of it before. And the easy and frequent yielding to the temptation, shows there was

a friend to sin within. 3. But if it were not so, yet that our hearts should be so frail, mutable, and easily drawn to sin, is a part of self-knowledge necessary to our preservation, and not to be disregarded. 4. I am sure Christ himself tells us, that “out of the heart proceed the sins of the life,” and that the “evil things of evil men come out of the evil treasure of their hearts.” And when God permitted the fall of good King Hezekiah, the text saith, “God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart;” that is, that he might show all that was in his heart, so that the weakness, and the remaining corruption of Hezekiah’s heart, were shown in the sin which he committed.

2. And as the sinful inclinations are hardly discerned, and long lie hid till some temptation draw them out; so the act itself is hardly discerned in any of its malignity, till it be done and past, and the soul is brought to a deliberate review. For while a man is in the act of sin, either his understanding is so far deluded, as to think it no sin in its kind, or none to him that then committeth it; or that it is better to venture on it than not, for the attaining of some seeming good, or the avoiding of some evil: or else the restraining act of the understanding is suspended and withdrawn; and it discerneth not practically the pernicious evil of the sin, and forbiddeth not the committing of it, or forbids it so remissly and with so low a voice, as is drowned by the clamour of contradicting passion: so that the prohibition is not heard. And how can it be then expected, that when a man hath not wit enough in

use, to see his sin so far as to forbear it, he should even then see it so far as rightly to judge of himself and it? And that when reason is low, and sensuality prevaieth, we should then have the right use of reason for self-discerning? / When a storm of passion hath blown out the light, and error hath extinguished it, we are unlikely then to know ourselves. / When the sensual part is pleasing itself with its forbidden objects, pleasure so corrupts the judgment, that men will easily believe that it is lawful, or that it is not very bad: so that sin is usually least known and felt, when it is greatest in exercise, and one would think should then be most perceptible. Like a frenzy or madness, or other delirium, that is least known when it is greatest and most in act, because its nature is destructive to the reason that should know it.

And thus you see that, through self-ignorance, it comes to pass, that both secret habits, and the most open acts of sin, are oftentimes little known. A man that is drunk, is in an unfit state to know what drunkenness is; and so is a man that is in his passion: you will hardly bring him to repentance till it be allayed. And so is a man in the brutifying heat of lust: and therefore abundance of unknown sin may remain in a soul, that laboureth not to be well acquainted with itself.

And as I have showed you this in general, both of habits and acts of sin, let us consider of some instances in particular, which will yet more discover the necessity of studying ourselves.

1. Little do we think what odious and dangerous errors may befall a person that now is orthodox!

What a slippery mutability the mind of man is liable to ! How variety of representations causeth variety of apprehensions : like some pictures that seem one thing when you look on them on one side, and another thing when on another side ; if you change your place, or change your light, they seem to change. Indeed God's word hath nothing in it thus fitted to deceive : but our weakness hath that which disposeth us to mistakes. The person that now is a zealous lover of the truth, (when it hath procured entertainment by the happy advantage of friends, acquaintance, ministers, magistrates, or common consent being on its side) may possibly turn a zealous adversary to it, when it loseth those advantages. When a minister shall change his mind, how many of the flock may he mislead ! When you marry, or contract any intimate friendship with a person of unsound and dangerous principles, how easily are they received ! When the stream of the times and authority shall change, and put the name of truth on falsehood, how many may be carried down the stream ! How zealous have many been for a faithful ministry, that have turned their persecutors, or made it a great part of their religion to revile them, when once they have turned to some sect that is possessed by the malicious spirit !

And O that we could stop here, and could not remember how faithfully and honestly some have seemed to love and obey the word of God, and to delight in the communion of saints, that by seducers have been brought to deny the divine authority of the Scriptures, and to turn their backs on all God's public ordinances of worship, and excommunicate

themselves from the society of the saints, and vilify or deny the works of the Spirit in them ! Little did these men once think themselves, whither they should fall, under the conceit of rising higher : and little would they have believed him that had told them what a change they would make. Had these men known themselves in time, and known what tinder was in their hearts, they would have walked more warily, and, it is likely, have escaped the snare ; but they fell into it, because they feared it not : and they feared it not, because they knew not or observed not, how prone they were to be infected.

2. Little do many think, in their adversity or low estate, what seeds are in their hearts, which prosperity would turn into very odious, scandalous sins, unless their vigilaney, and a special preservation, do prevent it. Many a man that in his shop, or at his plough, is censuring the great miscarriages of his superiors, doth little think how bad he might prove, if he were in the place of those he censureth. Many a poor man, that freely talks against the luxury, pride, and eruelty of the rich, doth little think how like them he should be, if he had their temptations and estates. How many persons that lived in good repute for humility, temperanee, and piety, have we seen turn proud, and sensual, and ungodly, when they have been exalted ! I must say that this age hath given us such lamentable instances. Would the persons that once walked with us in the ways of peace, and concord, and obedience, have believed that man that should have foretold them twenty years ago, how many should be puffed up and deluded by successes, and make themselves

believe, by the ebullition of pride, that victories authorized them to deny subjection to the higher powers, and, by right or wrong, to take down all that stood in their way, and to take the government into their own hands, and to depose their rightful governors, never once vouchsafing to ask themselves the question that Christ asked, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" They would have said as Hazael, "Am I a dog that I should do this?" If one had told them before, that when God hath charged every soul to be subject, on pain of condemnation, and they had vowed fidelity, they should break all these bonds of commands and vows; and all because they were able to do it: when the ministers of the Gospel, and their dearest friends, bore witness against the sin, the heart could not, by all this, be brought to perceive its guilt; or that it was any sin to overturn, overturn, overturn, till they had overturned all, and left not themselves a bough to stand upon. The unrighteous usage of magistracy and ministry, and the licentious indulgence of the open enemies and revilers of both, and of all the ordinances and churches of the Lord, do proclaim aloud to all that fear God, 'The depths and deceits of the heart are wonderful, and you little think what an hour of temptation may discover in you, or bring you to: O therefore know yourselves, and fear, and watch.'

3. A man that in adversity is touched with penitent and mortifying considerations, and strongly resolveth how holily and diligently he will live hereafter, if he be recovered or delivered from his suffering, doth oftentimes little think what a treacherous

heart he hath, and how little he may retain of all this sense of sin or duty, when he is delivered, and that he will be so much worse than he seemed or promised, as that he may have cause to wish he had been afflicted still. O how many sick-bed promises are as pious as we can desire, that wither away, and come to almost nothing, when health hath scattered the fears that caused them ! / How many, with that great imprisoned Lord, do, as it were, write the story of Christ upon their prison walls, that forget him when they are set at liberty ! / How many are tender-conscienced in a low estate, that when they are exalted, and converse with great ones, do think that they may waste their time in idleness and scandalous recreations, and be silent witnesses of the most odious sins from day to day ; and pray God be merciful to them when they go to the house of Rimmon ; and dare scarcely own a servant, or hated and reproached cause of God ! O what a preservative would it be to us in prosperity, to know the corruption of our hearts, and foresee in adversity what we are in danger of ! We should then be less ambitious to place our dwellings on the highest ground, and more fearful of the storms that *there* must be expected. How few are there (to a wonder) that grow better by worldly greatness and prosperity ! Yea, how few that hold their own, and grow not worse ! And yet how few are there (to a greater wonder) that refuse, or that desire not this perilous station, rather than to stand safer on the lower ground ! Verily, the lamentable fruits of prosperity, and the mutability of men that make great professions and promises in adversity, should

make the best of us jealous of our hearts, and convince us that there is greater corruption in them, than most are acquainted with, that are never put to such a trial. The height of prosperity shows what the man is indeed, as much as the depth of adversity.

Would one have thought, that had read of Hezekiah's earnest prayer in his sickness, and the miracle wrought to signify his deliverance, and of his written song of praise, that yet Hezekiah's heart should so deceive him, as to prove unthankful? You may see by his expressions, his high resolutions to spend his life in the praise of God: "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the fathers to the children shall make known thy truth. The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing our songs to the stringed instruments, all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord!" Would you think, that a holy man, thus wrapt up in God's praise, should yet miscarry, and be charged with ingratitude? And yet it is said of him, "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem." And God was fain to bring him to a review, and humble him for being thus lifted up, as the next words show: "Notwithstanding, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart." O sirs, what Christian that ever was in a deep affliction, and hath been recovered by the tender hand of mercy, hath not found how false a thing the heart is, and how little to be trusted in its best resolutions, and most confident promises! Heze-

kiah still remained a holy, faithful man ; but yet thus failed in particulars and degrees. Which of us can say, who have had the most affecting and engaging deliverances, that ever our hearts did fully answer the purposes and promises of our afflicted state ! and that we had as constant sensible thanksgivings after, as our complaints and prayers were before ! Not I ; with grief I must say, Not I, though God hath tried me many a time. Alas ! we are too like the deceitful Israelites : “ When he slew them, then they sought him ; and they returned and inquired after God : and they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues : for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.” Prosperity oft shows more of the hypocrisy of the unsound, and the infirmity of the upright, than appeared in adversity. When we feel the strong resolutions of our hearts to cast off our sin, to walk more thankfully and fruitfully with God than we have done, we can hardly believe that ever those hearts should lose so much of those affections and resolutions, as in a little time we find they do. Alas ! how quickly and insensibly do we slide into our former insensibility, and into our dull and fruitless course, when once the pain and fear is gone ! And then, when the next affliction comes, we are confounded and covered with shame, and have not the confidence with God in our prayers and cries as we had before, because we are conscious of our covenant-breaking and backsliding ; and at last we grow

so distrustful of our hearts, that we know not how to believe any promises which they make, or how to be confident of any evidence of grace that is in them; and so we lose the comfort of our sincerity, and are cast into a state of too much heaviness, and unthankful denial of our dearest mercies. And all this comes from the foul, unexpected relapses, and declinings of the heart, that comes not up to the promises we made to God in our distress.

But if exaltation be added to deliverance, how often doth it make the reason drunk, so that the man seems not the same! If you see them drowned in ambition, or worldly cares or pleasures; if you see how boldly they can play with the sin that once they would have trembled at; how powerful fleshly arguments are with them; how strangely they now look at plain-hearted, zealous, heavenly Christians, whose case they once desired to be in: and how much they are ashamed or afraid, to appear openly for an opposed cause of Christ, or openly to justify the persons that he justifieth, as if they had forgot that a day is coming, when they will be loath that Christ should be ashamed of them, and refuse to justify them, when the grand accuser is pleading for their condemnation! I say, if you see these men in their prosperity, would you not ask with wonder, ‘Are these the men that lately, in distress, did seem so humble, penitent, and sincere: that seemed so much above these vanities: that could speak with so much contempt of all the glory and pleasures of the world: and with so much pity of those giddy men that they now admire?’

O what pillars have been shaken by prosperity!

What promises broken ! What sad eruptions of pride and worldliness ! What openings and sad discoveries of heart, doth this alluring, charming trial make ! And why is it that men know not themselves when they are exalted, but because they did not sufficiently know themselves when they were brought low, nor suspected enough the purposes and promises of their hearts, in the day of their distress !

4. We would little think, when the heart is warmed, and raised even to heaven, in holy ordinances, how cold it will grow again, and how low it will fall down ! And when we have attained the clearest sight of our sincerity, we little think how quickly all such apprehensions may be lost ; and the misjudging soul, that reckons upon nothing but what it sees, or feels at present, may be at as great a loss, as if it had never perceived any fruits of the Spirit, or lineaments of the image of God upon itself. How confident, upon good grounds, is many an honest heart of its sincerity ! How certain that it desireth to be perfectly holy ! 1. That it would be rid of the nearest, dearest sin. 2. That it loves the saints. 3. That it loves the light of the most searching ministry. 4. And loveth the most practical, sanctifying truths. 5. And loves the ministry and means that have the greatest and most powerful tendency to make themselves more holy (all of which are certain evidences of sincerity). How clearly may the heart perceive all these, and write them down ; and yet, ere long, have lost the sight and sense of them all, and find itself in darkness and confusion, and perhaps be persuaded that all is con-

trary with them ! And when they read in their diary, or book of heart-accounts, that at such a day in examination, they found such or such an evidence ; and such a one at another ; and many at a third ; yet now they may be questioning, whether all this were not deceit, because it seems contrary to their present sight and feeling ; for it is present light that the mind discerneth by, and not by that which is past and gone, and of which we cannot so easily judge by looking back. They find in their accounts, At such a time I had my soul enlarged in prayer ; and at such a time I was full of joy ; and at another time I had strong assurance, and boldness with God, and confidence of his love in Christ, and doubted not of the pardon of all my sins, or the justification or acceptance of my person. But now, no joy, no assurance, no boldness, or confidence, or sense of love and pardon doth appear ; but the soul seemeth dead, and carnal, and unrenewed : as the same trees that in summer are beautified with pleasant fruits and flowers, in winter are deprived of their natural ornaments, and seem as dead, when the life is retired to the root. The soul that once would have defied the accuser, if he had told him that he did not love the brethren, nor love the sanctifying word and means, nor desire to be holy, and to be free from sin, is now as ready to believe the accusation, and will sooner believe the tempter than the minister that watcheth for them, as one that must give account. Yea, now it will turn the accuser of itself, and say as Satan, and falsely charge itself with that which Christ will acquit it of. The same work that a well composed believer hath in confuting the

calumnies of Satan, the same hath a minister to do, in confuting the false accusations of disturbed souls against themselves. And how subtle, how obstinate and tenacious are they ! As if they had learned some of the accuser's art : such as the uncharitable and malicious are against their neighbours, in picking quarrels with all that they say or do ; just such are poor disquieted souls against themselves.

And there is not a soul so high in joy and sweet assurance, but is liable to fall as low as this. And it makes our case to be much more grievous than otherwise it would be, because we know not ourselves in the hour of our consolations, and think not how apt we are to lose all our joy, and what seeds of doubts, and fears, and grief, are still within us, and what cause we have to expect a change. And therefore, when so sad a change befalleth us, it surpriseth us with terror, and casteth the poor soul almost into despair. Then crieth the distressed sinner, ‘ Did I ever think to see this day ! are my hopes and comforts come to this ! Did I think so long that I was a child of God, and must I now perceive that he disowneth me ! Did I draw near him as my Father, and place my hope in his relief ; and now must my mouth be stopped with unbelief, and must I look at him afar off, and pass by the doors of mercy with despair ! Is all my sweet familiarity with the godly, and all my comfortable hours under the precious means of grace, now come to this !’ O how the poor soul here calls itself ‘ O vile apostate, miserable sinner ! O that I had never lived to see this gloomy day ! It had been better for me never to have known the way of righteousness, than thus to have relapsed ; and have all the

prayers that I have put up, and all the sermons I have heard, and the books that I have read, to aggravate my sin and misery.' O how many a poor Christian in this dark misjudging case, is ready, with Job, to curse the day that he was born, and to say of it, "Let it be darkness, let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it: let it not be joined to the days of the year: let it not come into the number of the months:—Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul: which long for death, and it cometh not—which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave? Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?" Such are the lamentations of distressed souls, that lately were as in the arms of Christ. Their lives are a burden to them; their food is bitter to them; their health is a sickness to them; their dearest relations are become as strangers; and all their comforts are turned into sorrows, and the world seems to them as a howling wilderness, and themselves as desolate, forsaken souls. They are still as upon the cross, and will own no titles, but vile, unworthy, lost, undone, forlorn and desolate; as if they had learned no words from Christ, but "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

And much of this comes from the ignorance of ourselves in the time of peace and consolation. We are as David, that saith, "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." One frown of God, or withdrawing the light of his countenance

from us, would quickly turn our day into night, and cover us with sackcloth, and lay us in the dust.

Take warning, therefore, dear Christians, you that are yet in the sunshine of mercy, and were never at so sad a loss, nor put to grope in the darkness of mistake and terror. No man is so well in health, but must reckon on it that he may be sick. When you feel nothing but peace and quietness of mind, expect a stormy night of fears, that may disquiet you. When you are feasting upon the sweet entertainments of your Father's love, consider that feasting is not likely to be your ordinary diet, but harder fare must be expected. Look on poor Christians, in spiritual distress, with compassion, and join in hearty prayer for them, and remember that this may prove your case. If you say, To what purpose should you know beforehand, how subject you are to this falling sickness: I answer, not to anticipate, or bring on your sorrows; but if it may be, to prevent them; or if that may not be, at least to prevent the extremity and terror, and to be provided for such a storm. When you are now in health of body, and not disabled by melancholy, nor overwhelmed with the troubles of your mind, you have leisure calmly to understand the case of such misjudging and distressed souls; and accordingly you may avoid the things that cause it: and you may be furnished with right principles, and with promises, and experiences, and recorded evidences of grace; and when comfort is withdrawn, you may by such provision understand, that God changeth not, nor breaks his covenant, nor abates his love, when your apprehensions change: and that this is no sign of a

forsaken soul: and that the ceasing of our feast, and withdrawing of the table, is not a turning us out of the family.

And what I have said of the loss of comfort may be said also of the diminished and interrupted operations of all grace. We little think, in the vigour of our holy progress, what falls, and languishings we may find. When you have access with boldness in prayer unto God, and lively affections and words at will, and comfortable returns, remember that you may come to a sadder ease; and that many a true Christian hath such withdrawings of the spirit of prayer, as makes them think they are possessed with a dumb devil, and question whether ever they prayed acceptably at all, and cannot so much as observe the groanings of the Spirit in them.

When you are warm and vigorous in the work of God, and find delight in all the ordinances, remember that you are subject to such sicknesses as may take away your appetite, and make you say, I have no mind to hear, or read, or pray: methinks I feel no sweetness in them! I was wont to go up with comfort to the house of God; I was glad when the Lord's-day was come, or nigh: it did me good to see the faces of the saints: O the meltings, the strivings, the lively workings of soul that I have had in their sweet communion! when they have preached and prayed as full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith: but now I do but force myself to duty: I go to prayer as against my will: I feel small relish in the word of life. O how many Christians, that little thought of such a day, cry out that spiritual death is upon them; that they are dead to prayer, and

dead to meditation, and dead to holy conference; and that once they thought they were dead to the world, and now they find they are dead to God. Understand before that you are liable to this, and you may do much to prevent it: and if you should fall into a sickness and loss of appetite, you may be able to distinguish it from death.

When you are sweetly refreshed at the table of the Lord, and have there received a sealed pardon, as from heaven into your bosoms, and have found delightful entertainment with the Lord, remember that the day may come, when dulness, and unbelief, and fears, may so prevail, as to make that an ordinance of greatest terror to you, and you may sit there in trembling, lest you should eat and drink your own damnation: and you may go home in fears, lest Satan have there taken possession of you, or lest it have sealed you up to wrath: or you may fly from that feast which is your due, and Christ invites you to, through fears, lest it belong not to you, and should but harden you more in sin: for, alas! this sad and sinful case is too often the case of true believers, that little feared it in their spiritual prosperity. So that the very high expectations of such workings of soul, which they cannot often or ordinarily reach, and the frustrating of those expectations, doth so often turn the table of the Lord into the bitterness of wormwood, into distracting fears and troubles, that I cannot tell whether any other part of worship occasion so much distress to many that are upright at the heart as this doth, which is appointed for their special consolation.

So, when you are clear and vigorous in the life of

faith, and can abhor all temptations to unbelief, and the beams of sacred verity in the Scriptures have showed you that it is the undoubted word of God, and you have quietly established your soul on Christ, and built your hopes upon his promises, and can with a cheerful contempt let go the world for the accomplishment of your hopes; remember yet that there is a secret root of unbelief remaining in you, and that this odious sin is but imperfectly mortified in the best; and that it is more than possible that you may see the day when the tempter will assault you with questionings of the word of God, and trouble you with the injections of blasphemous thoughts and doubts, whether it be true or not! And that you that have thought of God, of Christ, of heaven, of the immortal state of souls, with joy and satisfied confidence, may be in the dark about them, affrighted with wicked suggestions of the enemy, and may think of them all with troublesome, distracted doubts, and be forced to cry, with the disciples, "Lord increase our faith." And, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief." Yea, worse than so; some upright souls have been so amazed and distracted by the tempter, and their distempered hearts, as to think they do not believe at all, nor yet are able sincerely to say, "Lord help thou my unbelief." When yet at that time their fears and their abstaining from iniquity show, that they believe the threatenings, and therefore indeed believe the word. Now, if we did but thoroughly know ourselves, when faith is in its exercise and strength, and consider whither the secret seeds of remaining unbelief may bring us, being forewarned, we should

be fore-armed, and should mortify our faith the better, and be provided against these sad assaults. And if the malignant spirit be suffered to storm this fortress of the soul, we should more manfully resist: and we should not be overwhelmed with horror, as soon as any hideous and blasphemous temptations do assault us. When Christ himself was not exempted from the most blasphemous temptation, even the worshipping of the devil instead of God; though in him there was no sinful disposition to entertain it.

O watch and pray, Christians, in your most prosperous and comfortable state! “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation:” for you little think what is yet within you; and what advantage the deceiver hath; and how much of your own to take his part; and how low he may bring you, both in point of grace and peace, though he cannot damn you.

I am troubled that I must tell you of so sad a case, that even the children of God may fall into, lest by troubling you with the opening of your danger, I should do any thing to bring you into it. But because self-ignorance, and not being beforehand acquainted with it, may do much more, I have timely showed you the danger with the remedy.

5. Another instance of the darkness even of a heart that in part is sanctified, is in the successes of the temptations of adversity. When we want nothing, we think we value not the world, and we could bear the loss of all, but when poverty or danger comes, what trouble and unseemly whining is there, as if it were by a worldling that is deprived of his idol, and all the portion that ever he must have!

And by the shameful moan and stir that we make for what we want, we show more sinful overvaluing of it, and love to it, than before we observed or would believe. O how confidently and piously have I heard some inveigh against the love of the world, as if there had been no such thing in them; who yet have been so basely dejected, when they have been unexpectedly stripped of their estates, as if they had been quite undone!

How patiently do we think we could bear affliction, till we feel it! and how easily and piously can we exhort others unto patience, when we have no sense of what they suffer! But when our turn is come, alas! we seem to be other men. Suffering is now another thing; and patience harder than we imagined. And how inclinable are we to hearken to temptations, to use sinful means to come out of our sufferings! Who would have thought that faithful Abraham should have been so unbelieving, as to equivocate in such a danger, and expose the chastity of his wife to hazard, as we read in Gen. xii. and that he should fall into the same sin again, on the same occasion, (Gen. xx.) to Abimelech, as before he had done with Pharaoh! and that Isaac should, after him, fall into the same sin, in the same place! The life of faith doth set us so much above the fear of man, and show us the weakness and nothingness of mortal worms, and the faithfulness and all-sufficiency of God, that one would think the frowns and threatenings of a man should signify nothing to us, when God stands by, and giveth us such ample promises and security for our confirmation and encouragement: and yet what base deject-

edness, and sinful compliances are many brought to, through the fear of man, that before the hour of this temptation, could talk as courageously as any ! This was the case of Peter, and of many a one that hath a wounded conscience, and wronged their profession by too cowardly a disposition ; which if it were fore-known, we might do more for our confirmation, and should betake ourselves in time to Christ, in the use of means, for strength. Few turn their backs on Christ, or a good cause, in the time of trial, that are jealous of themselves beforehand, and afraid lest they should forsake him. Few fall that are afraid of falling : but the self-ignorant and self-confident are careless of their way, and it is they that fall.

6. Another instance that I may give you, is, in the unexpected appearances of pride in those that yet are truly humble. Humility speaks in their confessions, aggravating their sin, and searching heart and life for matter of self-accusation : they call themselves “ Less than the least of all God’s mercies.” They are ready, with the woman of Canaan, even to own the name of dogs, and to confess themselves unworthy of the children’s crumbs, and unworthy to live upon the patience and provisions of God : they will spend whole hours, and days of humiliation, in confessing their sin, and bewailing their weaknesses and want of grace, and lamenting their desert of misery. They are often cast down so much too low, that they dare not own the title of God’s children, nor any of his special grace, but take themselves for mere unsanctified, hardened sinners ; and all that can be said, will not convince them that they have any saving interest in Christ, nor hinder them from

pouring out unjust accusations against themselves. And all this is done by them in the uprightness of their hearts, and not dissemblingly. And yet, would you think, that, with all this humility, there should be any pride? and that the same persons should lift up themselves, and resist their helps to further humiliation? Do they think, in their dejections, that it is in their hearts so much to exalt themselves? I confess many of them are sensible of their pride, even to the increase of their humility; and, as it is said of Hezekiah, “do humble themselves for the pride of their hearts, so that God’s wrath doth not come upon them.” But yet, too few are so well acquainted with the power and rootedness of this sin at the heart, and the workings of it in the hour of temptation, as they should be. Observe it but at such times as these, and you will see *that* break forth, that before appeared not. 1. When we are undervalued and slighted, and meaner persons preferred before us; and when our words and judgments are made light of, and our parts thought to be poor and low; when any blot or dishonour is cast upon us, deserved or undeserved; when we are slandered or reproached, and used with despite: what a matter do we make of it, and how much, then, doth our pride appear in our distaste, and offence, and impatience! So that the same person, that can pour out words of blame against himself, cannot bear half as much from others, without displeasure and disquietness of mind. It would help us much to know this by ourselves, in the time of our humility, that we may be engaged to more watchfulness and resistance of our pride.

2. When we are reprov'd of any disgraceful sin, how hardly goes it down, and how many excuses have we ! How seldom are we brought to downright penitent confessions ! What secret distaste is apt to be rising in our hearts, against the reprover ! And how seldom hath he that hearty thanks, which so great a benefit deserves ! And would any think, in our humiliations and large confessions unto God, that we were so proud ! To know this by ourselves, would make us more suspicious and ashamed to be guilty of it.

3. When any preferment or honour is to be given, or any work to be done that is a mark of dignity, how apt are we to think ourselves as fit for it as any, and to be displeased, if the honour or employment do pass by us !

4. When we are admired, applauded, or excessively esteemed and loved, how apt are we to be too much pleased with it ! which sheweth a proud desire to be somebody in the world ; and that there is much of this venom at the bottom in our hearts, even when we lay ourselves in the dust, and walk in sackcloth, and pass the heaviest judgment on ourselves.

7. Another instance of our unacquaintedness with our hearts, and the latent, undiscerned corruption of them, is our little discerning or bemoaning those secret master-sins, which lie at the root of all the rest, and are the life of the old man, and the cause of all the miscarriages of our lives. As, 1. Unbelief of the truth of the Holy Scriptures, of the immortality of the soul, and the life of joy or misery hereafter, and the other articles of the Christian faith. What abundance of Christians are sensible

of their unbelief, as to the applying acts of faith that tend to their assurance of their own salvation, that are little sensible of any defect in the assenting act, or of any secret root of unbelief about the truth of the Gospel revelations ! And yet, alas ! it is this that weakeneth all our graces : it is this that feedeth all our woe ! O happy men, were we free from this ! What prayers should we put up ! What lives should we lead ! How watchfully should we walk ! With what contempt should we look on the allurements of the world ! With what disdain should we think on fleshly lusts ! With what indignation should we meet the tempter, and scorn his base, unreasonable motions, if we did but perfectly believe the very truth of the Gospel, and world to come ! How careful and earnest should we be, to make our calling and election sure ! How great a matter should we make of sin, and of helps and hinderances in the way to heaven ! How much should we prefer that state of life that furthereth our salvation, before that which strengtheneth our snares, by furthering our prosperity and pleasure in the world, if we were not weak or wanting in our belief of the certain verity of these things ! Did we better know the badness of our hearts herein, it would engage us more in fortifying the vitals, and looking better to our foundation, and winding up this spring of faith, which must give life to all right motions of the soul.

2. How insensible are too many, of the great imperfection of their love to God ! What passionate complaints have we of the want of sorrow for their sin, and want of memory, and of ability to pray, &c.

when their complaints for want of love to God, and more affecting knowledge of him, are so cold and customary, as shows us they little observe the greatness of this sinful want ! This is the very heart, and sum, and poison, of all the sins of our soul and life. So much as a man loves God, so much he is holy : and so much he hath of the Spirit and image of Jesus Christ : and so much he hath of all saving graces : and so much he will abhor iniquity : and so much he will love the commands of God. As love is the sum of the law and prophets, so should it be the sum of our care and study, through all our lives, to exercise and strengthen it.

3. How little are most Christians troubled for want of love to men, to brethren, neighbours, and enemies ! How cold are their complaints for their defects in this, in comparison of other of their complaints ! But is there not cause of as deep humiliation for this sin, as almost any other ? It seems to me, that want of love is one of the most prevalent diseases among us, when I hear it so little seriously lamented. I often hear people say, O that we could hear more attentively and affectionately, and pray more fervently, and weep for sin more plenteously : but how seldom do I hear them say, O that we did love our brethren more ardently, and our neighbours and enemies more heartily than we do, and set ourselves to do them good ! There is so little pains taken to bring the heart to the love of others, and so few and cold requests put up for it, when yet the heart is backward to it, that makes me conclude that charity is weaker in most of us than we observe. And indeed it appeareth so when it comes to trial :

to that trial which Christ will judge it by at last, Matt. xxv. When love must be showed by any self-denial, or costly demonstration, by parting with our food and raiment to supply the wants of others, and by hazarding ourselves for them in their distress, then see how much we love indeed ! Good words cost little ; so cheap an exercise of charity as is mentioned, (James ii.) “ Depart in peace, be warmed, and filled,” is an insufficient evidence of the life of grace, and will do as little for the soul of the giver, as for the body of the receiver. And how little hazardous or costly love is found among us, either to enemies, neighbours, or to saints ! Did we better know our hearts, there would be more care and diligence used to bring them to effectual, fervent love, than to those duties that are of less importance ; and we should learn what this meaneth, “ I will have mercy and not sacrifice,” which Christ sets the Pharisees twice to learn.

8. Another instance of unobserved corruption of the heart, is, the frequent and secret insinuations of selfishness in all that we do towards God or man. When we think we are serving God alone, and have cleansed our hearts from mixtures and deceit, before we are aware, self-interest, or self-esteem, or self-conceit, or self-love, or self-will, or self-seeking, do secretly creep in, and mar the work. We think we are studying, and preaching, and writing purely for God, and the common good, or the benefit of souls ; and perhaps little observe how subtly selfishness insinuates, and makes a party, and biasseth us from the holy ends, and the simplicity and sincerity, which we thought we had carefully maintained : so that we

are studying, and preaching, and writing for ourselves, when we take no notice of it. When we enter upon any office, or desire preferment, or riches, or honour in the world, we think we do it purely for God, to furnish us for his service, and little think how much of selfishness is in our desires. When we are doing justice, or showing mercy, in giving alms, or exhorting the ungodly to repent, or doing any other work of piety or charity, we little think how much of selfishness is secretly latent in the bent and intention of the heart. When we think we are defending the truth and cause of God, by disputing, writing, or by the sword; or when we think we are faithfully maintaining, on one side, order and obedience, against confusion, and turbulent, disquiet spirits, or the unity of the church against division; or, on the other hand, that we are sincerely opposing pharisaical corruptions, and hypocrisy, and tyranny, and persecution, and are defending the purity of divine worship, and the power and spirituality of religion; in all these cases we little know how much of carnal self may be secretly unobserved in the work.

But above all others, Christ himself, and the Holy Ghost, that searcheth the hidden things of the heart, hath warned one sort to be suspicious of their hearts; and that is, those that cannot bear the dissent and infirmities of their brethren in tolerable things, and those that are calling for fire from heaven, and are all for force and cruelty in religion; for vexing, imprisoning, banishing, or otherwise doing as they would not be done by, proportionably in their own case. He tells his two disciples, in such a case, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

As if he should say, ‘ You think you purely seek my honour in the revenge of this contempt and opposition of unbelievers, and you think it would much redound to the propagation of the faith; and therefore you think that all this zeal is purely from my Spirit: but you little know how much of a proud, carnal, selfish spirit is in these desires! You would fain have me, and yourselves with me, to be openly vindicated by fire from heaven, and be so owned by God that all men may admire you, and you may exercise a dominion in the world; and you stick not at the sufferings and ruin of these sinners, so you may attain your end: but I tell you, this selfish, cruel spirit, is unlike my Spirit, which inclineth to patience, forbearance, and compassion.’

“ Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye.”
 “ Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant?” “ Why dost thou judge thy brother? and why dost thou set at nought thy brother? We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.”
 “ Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” “ We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.” “ Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

So, also, men are frequently mistaken, when they are zealously contending against their faithful pastors and their brethren, and vilifying others, and quenching love, and troubling the church, upon pre-

tence of greater knowledge or integrity in themselves, which is notably discovered, and vehemently pressed, by the apostle, James iii. 1. &c. where you may see how greatly the judgment of the Spirit of God, concerning our hearts, doth differ from men's judgment of themselves. They that had a masterly, contentious, envious zeal, did think they were of the wiser sort of Christians, and of the highest form in the school of Christ; when yet the Holy Ghost telleth them that their wisdom descended not from above, but was earthly, sensual, and devilish; and that their envy and strife doth bring confusion, and every evil work; and that the wisdom from above is neither unholy nor contentious, but "first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated."

You see, then, how often and dangerously we are deceived by unacquaintedness with ourselves; and how selfish, carnal principles, ends, and motives, are often mixed in the actions which we think are the most excellent for wisdom, zeal, and piety. O therefore, what cause have we to study, and search, and watch such hearts, and not too boldly or carelessly to trust them !

And it is not only hypocrites that are subject to these deceitful sins, who have them in dominion, but true believers, that have a remnant of this carnal, selfish principle, continually offering to insinuate and corrupt their most excellent works, and even all that they do.

9. The strong eruption of those passions that seemed to be quite mortified, doth show that there is more evil lurking in the heart than ordinarily doth appear ! How calmly do we converse together, how

mildly do we speak, till some provoking word or wrong do blow the coals ! And then the dove appeareth to partake of a fierce nature ; and we can perceive that in the flame, which we perceive not in the spark. When a provocation can bring forth censorious, reviling, scornful words, it shows what before was latent in the heart.

10. We are very apt to think those affections to be purely spiritual, which, in the issue, appear to be mixed with carnality. Our very love to the assemblies and ordinances of worship, and to ministers, and other servants of the Lord ; to books, and knowledge, are ordinarily mixed ; and good and bad are strangely complicated, and twisted together in the same affections and works. And the love that becometh in the Spirit, is apt to degenerate into carnal love, and to have too much respect to riches, or honour, or personage, or birth, or particular concerns of our own, and so it is corrupted, as wine that turneth into vinegar, before we are aware. And though still there be uprightness of heart, yet too much hypocrisy is joined with it, when it is little perceived or suspected.

And thus, in ten instances, I have showed you how much the servants of Christ themselves, may be mistaken, or unacquainted with their hearts ; and how the work of mortification is hindered by this covering of so many secret, unobserved sins. But I must here desire you to take heed of running into their extreme, who hereupon conclude, that their hearts, being so dark and so deceitful, are not at all to be understood ; and, therefore, they are still so suspicious of the worst, as that they will not be per-

suaded of the grace that plainly worketh in them, and will condemn themselves for that which they are not guilty of, upon suspicion that they may be guilty, and not know it, and think that all the sin that they forbear, is but for want of a temptation; and that, if they had the same temptations, they should be as bad as any others.

I would entreat these persons to consider of these truths, for their better information :

1. Temptations do not only show the evil that is in the heart, but breed much more, and turn a spark into a flame. / Adam was made a sinner by temptation.

2. There is no Christian so mortified, but hath such remnants of corruption and concupiscence, as would quickly bring forth heinous sins, if temptations beyond strength were let loose upon him. What need you more proof than the sad instances of Noah, Lot, David, Solomon, and Peter? It did not prove that any of these were graceless hypocrites before, because they fell so foully by temptations. And yet these objectors think they are graceless, because some strong temptations might make them fall.

3. Is it not God's way of saving men, to give them so much inward grace as no temptation can overcome, but to preserve and bring them safe to heaven, by moral conduct, together with internal changes of their hearts. And, therefore, he keepeth men from sin, by keeping them from temptations that are too strong for them. All human strength is limited; and there are none on earth have such a measure of grace, but a temptation may

be imagined so strong, as to overcome them. And if God should let Satan do his worst, there must be extraordinary assistances to preserve us, or we should fall. Bless God if he “lead you not into temptation, but deliver you from the evil,” by keeping you far enough from the snare. This is the way of preservation that we are taught to pray and hope for.

4. And, therefore, it is our own duty to keep as far from temptations as we can; and if we have grace to avoid the sin by avoiding the temptation, we have such grace as God useth for the saving of his own; not that he hath saving grace that would live wickedly, if he were but tempted to it by those ordinary trials that human nature may expect; but the soul that preferreth God and glory before the pleasures of sin for a season, if it so continue, shall be saved, though possibly there might have been a temptation so strong as would have conquered the measure of grace that he had, if it had not been fortified with new supplies. Avoid temptation, that you may avoid the sin and punishment. Make not yourselves worse, on pretence of discovering how bad you are. All men are defectible, and capable of every sin, and must be saved from it by that grace which worketh on nature according to that nature, and prevaieth with reason by means agreeable to reason. If we think we are wicked, because we find that we have hearts that could be wicked, were they let alone, we may as well say, Adam was wicked in his innocency, much more David, Solomon, and Peter, before their falls. It is not he that can sin that shall be punished; but he that doth sin, or would sin if he could, and had rather

have the sin for its pleasure, than be free from it, and be holy, in order to salvation, and the favour, and pleasing, and enjoying of God in endless glory.

5. Lastly, Let such persons try themselves by their conquest over the temptations which they have, and not by imaginary conflicts with all that they think may possibly at any time assault them. You have still the same flesh to deal with, and the same world and devil, that will not let you go to heaven without temptation. If the temptations which you have already, keep you not from preferring the love and fruition of God before the pleasure of the flesh; and a life of faith and holiness, before a life of infidelity, and impiety, and sensuality, so that you had rather live the former than the latter, I am sure, then, your temptations have not kept you from a state of grace. And you may be assured, that, for the time to come, if you watch and pray, you may escape the danger of temptation; and that God will increase your strength, if he increase your trials: be not secure, be you ever so holy. Think not that you have a nature that cannot sin, or cannot be tempted to a love of sin: but “let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

And thus I have showed you how self-ignorance hindereth the conquest and mortifying of sin, even in the godly, and now shall add some further motives.

2. Not knowing ourselves, and the secret corrup-

tions of our hearts, doth make sin surprise us the more dangerously, and break forth the more shamefully, and wound our consciences the more terribly. The unsuspected sin hath least opposition, and, when it breaks out, doth, like an unobserved fire, go far before we are awakened to quench it. And it confoundeth us with shame, to find ourselves so much worse than we imagined. It overwhelmeth the soul with despairing thoughts, to find itself so bad, when it thought it had been better. We are still ready to think whatever we discern that is good within us, that we may as well be mistaken now as we were before. And thus, our present self-ignorance, when discovered, may hinder all the comforts of our lives.

3. Lastly, not knowing ourselves, and our particular sins, and wants, and weaknesses, doth keep us from a particular application of the promises, and from seeking those particular remedies from Christ which our case requireth; and so our mercies lie by neglected, while we need them, and do not understand our need.



CHAPTER VIII.

Exhortations to the Godly to know their Graces and Duties.

II. I AM next to persuade believers to know their graces and their happiness. Good is the object of voluntary knowledge, but Evil of forced involuntary knowledge, unless as the knowledge of evil tendeth

to some good. Therefore, methinks, you should be readiest to this part of the study of yourselves: and yet, alas! the presumptuous are not more unwilling to know their sin and misery, than some perplexed Christians are backward to acknowledge their grace and happiness! How hard is it to convince them of the tender love of God towards them, and of the sincerity of their love to him; and to make them believe that they are dear to God when they loathe themselves! How hard is it to persuade them that the riches of Christ, the promises of the gospel, and the inheritance of the saints, belong to them! And the reasons, among others, are principally these:

1. The remnant of sins are so great, and so active, and troublesome, as that the feeling of these contrary dispositions doth hinder them from observing the operations of grace. It is not easy to discern the sincerity of faith among so much unbelief; or the sincerity of love, where there is so much averseness; or of humility, where there is so much pride; or of repentance and mortification, where there is so much concupiscence and inclination to sin: especially when grace, by its enmity to sin, doth make the soul so suspicious and sensible of it, as that the observation of it turns their mind from the observation of the contrary good that is in them. Health is not observed in other parts, when the feeling of the stone, or but the toothache, takes us up. The thoughts are called all to the part affected; and sickness and wounds are felt more sensibly than health. The fears of misery and sin, are more easily excited, and more passionate than love and hope, and all the affections that are em-

ployed in the prosecution of good. And, in the midst of fears, it is hard to feel the matter of our joys: fear is a tyrant if it exceed, and will not permit us to believe or observe the cause of hope. These fears are useful to our preservation, but they too often pervert our judgments, and hinder our due consolation. Saith Seneca, "He that feareth snares, doth not fall into them: a wise man escapeth evil by always fearing it." And the Holy Ghost saith, "Happy is the man that feareth alway; but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief."

Moderate fears, then, are given to believers for their necessary preservation, that, walking among enemies and snares, they may take heed and escape them. But when this passion doth exceed, it abuseth us, and drowns the voice of reason; it maketh us believe that every temptation is a sin, and every sin is such as cannot stand with grace, and will hardly ever be pardoned by Christ. Every sin against knowledge and conscience doth seem almost unpardonable; and if it were deliberate, after profession of religion, it seems to be the sin against the Holy Ghost. As children and other fearful persons, that fear the devil by way of apparitions, do think in the dark he is ready to lay hold on them; so the fearful Christian is still thinking that thing he feareth is coming upon him. The fear of an unregenerate, unpardoned state, doth make him think he is in it; and the fear of the wrath of God doth make him think that he is under it. It is wonderfully hard, in a fearful state, or indeed in any passion that is strong, to have the free use of judgment for the knowing of ourselves, and to dis-

cern any grace, or evidence, or mercy, which is contrary to our fears, especially when the feeling of much corruption doth turn our eyes from the observation of good, and we are still taken up with the matter of our disease.

2. Another cause that we hardly know our graces, is because they are weak and small; and therefore, in the midst of so much corruption, are oftentimes hardly discerned from none. A little faith, even as a grain of mustard-seed, may save us; a little love to God that is sincere will be accepted; and weak desires may be fulfilled; but they are frequently undiscerned, or their sincerity questioned by those that have them, and therefore bring but little comfort. Peter's little faith did keep him from drowning, but not from doubting and fearing he should be drowned, nor from beginning to sink. "He walked on the water to go to Jesus; but when he saw the wind boisterous he was afraid; and, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" So the little faith of the disciples kept them from perishing, but not from their fear of perishing. "When a great tempest arose, so that the ship was covered with waves, they cry, Lord, save us, we perish: and he saith to them, Why are ye afraid, O ye of little faith?" The little faith of the same disciples entitled them to the fatherly protection and provision of God; but it kept them not from sinful cares and fears, about what they should eat or drink, or wherewith they should be clothed. "Take no thought for your life, what you shall

eat, or drink, or for your body what you shall put on.—Why take you thought for raiment?—If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" So in Matt. xvi. 7, 8. The seed that Christ likeneth his kingdom to, hath life while it is buried in the earth, and is visible while a little seed; but is not so observable as when it cometh to be a tree. Though God "despise not the day of little things," and though he "will not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax," yet ourselves or others cannot discern and value these obscure beginnings, as God doth. But because we cannot easily find a little faith, and a little love, when we are looking for it, we take the non-appearance for a non-existence, and call it none.

3. Sanctification is oft unknown to those that have it, because they do not try and judge themselves by sure infallible marks, the essentials of the new man; but by uncertain qualifications, that are mutable, and belong but to the beauty and activity of the soul.

The essence of holiness, as denominated from the object, is the consent to the three articles of the covenant of grace. 1. That we give up ourselves to God, as our God and reconciled Father in Jesus Christ. 2. That we give up ourselves to Jesus Christ, as our Redeemer and Saviour, to recover us, reconcile us, and bring us unto God. 3. That we give up ourselves to the Holy Ghost as our Sanctifier, to guide and illuminate us, and perfect the image of God upon us, and prepare us for glory.

The essence of sanctification, as denominated from its opposite objects, is nothing but our renunciation and rejection of the flesh, the world, and the devil; of pleasures, profits, and honours, as they would be preferred before God, and draw us to forsake him.

The essence of sanctification, as denominated from our faculties, which are the subject of it, is nothing but this preferring of God, and grace, and glory, above the said pleasures, profits, and honours.

1. By the estimation of our understandings. 2. By the resolved habitual choice of our wills. 3. And in the bent and drift of our endeavours in our conversations. In these three acts, as upon the first three objects, and against the other three objects, lieth all that is essential to sanctification, and that we should judge of our sincerity, and title to salvation by, as I before showed.

But besides these, there are many desirable qualities and gifts, which we may seek for, and be thankful for; but are not essential to our sanctification. Such are,

1. The knowledge of other truths, besides the essentials of faith and duty, and the soundness of judgment, and freedom from error in these lesser points.

2. A strong memory to carry away the things that we read and hear.

3. A right order of our thoughts, when we can keep them from confusion, roving, and distraction.

4. Freedom from too strong affections about the creatures, and from disturbing passions.

5. Lively affections, and feeling operations of

the soul towards God, in holy duty, and tender meltings of the heart for sin, which are very desirable, but depend so much on the temperature of the body, and outward accidents, and are but the vigour, and not the life and being of the new creature, that we must not judge of our sincerity by them. Some Christians scarce know what any such lively feelings are; and some have them very seldom, and, I think, no one constantly; and, therefore, if our peace, or judgment of ourselves, be laid on these, we shall be still wavering and unsettled, and tossed up and down as the waves of the sea; sometimes seeming to be almost in heaven, and presently near the gates of hell: when our state doth not change at all, as these feelings and affectionate motions of the soul do; but we are still in our safe relation to God, while our first essential graces do continue, though our failings, dulness, weaknesses, and wants, must be matter of moderate filial humiliation to us.

6. The same must be said of all common gifts, of utterance, in conference or prayer, and of quickness of understanding, and such like.

7. Lastly, The same must be said also of all that rectitude of life, and those degrees of obedience that are above mere sincerity; in which one true Christian doth exceed another; and in which we should all desire to abound; but must not judge ourselves to be unsanctified, merely because we are imperfect; or to be unjustified sinners, merely because we are sinners.

In judging ourselves by our lives and practices, two extremes must be carefully avoided: on the left hand that of the profane, and of the Antino-

mians. The former cannot distinguish between sanctified and unsanctified, justified and unjustified sinners; and when they have once conceited that they are in the favour of God, whatever they do, they say, ‘We are but sinners, and so are the best.’ The latter teach men, that when once they are justified, they are not, for any sins, to doubt again of their justified state, lest they should seem to make God changeable.

On the other hand must be avoided this extreme of perplexed doubting Christians, that make all their sins, or too many of them, to be matter of doubting, which should be but matter of humiliation.

I know it is a very great difficulty that hath long perplexed the doctors of the church, to define what sins are consistent, and what inconsistent, with a state of holiness and salvation, which, if any distinguish by the names of *mortal* and *venial*, taking the words in no other sense, I shall not quarrel with them. At present I shall say but this, for the resolving of this great and weighty question.

1. It is not the bare act of sin, in itself considered, that must determine the case; but the act compared with the life of grace, and with true repentance. Whoever hath the love of God and life of grace, is in a state of salvation; and therefore, whatever sin consisteth with the fore-described essentials of sanctification, namely, the habitual devotion of the soul to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the habitual renunciation of the flesh, the world, and devil, consisteth with a state of life. And true repentance proveth the pardon of all sin;

and therefore, whatever sin consisteth with habitual repentance, which is the hatred of sin, as sin, and hath actual repentance when it is observed, and there is time for deliberation, consisteth with a state of grace. Now, in habitual conversion or repentance, the habitual willingness to leave our sin, must be more than our sinful habitual willingness to keep it. Now you may by this discern, as to particular acts, whether they are consistent with habitual hatred of sin. For some sins are so much in the power of the will, that he that hath a habitual hatred of them, cannot frequently commit them. And some sins are also of so heinous a nature or degree, that he that habitually hateth sin, cannot frequently commit them; not at all, while his hatred to them is in act. And he that truly repenteth of them, cannot frequently return to them; because that sheweth that repentance was indeed either but superficial, or not habitual. But some sins are not so great and heinous, and therefore do not so much deter the soul, and some are not so fully in the power of a sanctified will, as passions, thoughts, &c. and therefore may oftener be committed in consistency with habitual repentance or hatred of sin. To examine particulars, would be tedious and digressive.

2. And I must further answer, that our safety, and, consequently, our peace and comfort, lieth in flying as far from sin as we can. And therefore, he that will sin as much as will consist with any sparks of grace, shall bury those sparks by his sin, and shall not know that he hath any grace, nor have the comfort of it; as being in a condition unfit for actual assurance and comfort, till he be brought to actual repentance and amendment.

Thus have I showed you, by what you must try your sanctification, if you will know it; which I before proved to you from Scripture.

4. Another cause that many Christians are ignorant of their state of grace, is their looking so much at what they should be, and what others are that have a right degree of grace, and what is commanded as our duty, that they observe not what they have already, because it is short of what they ought to have. We are thus too much about outward mercies. We are more troubled for one mercy taken from us, than comforted in many that are left us. We observe our diseases and our sores, more sensibly than our health. David, for one Absalom, is so afflicted, that he wished he had died for him though a rebel ! when his comfort in Solomon, and his other children is laid aside. As all the humours flow to the pained place, so do our thoughts; and so we overlook the matter of our comfort.

5. And it very much hindereth the knowledge of our graces, that we search upon so great disadvantages as hinder a true discovery. Among many others, I will instance but in two or three.

1. We surprise our souls with sudden questions, and look for a full and satisfactory answer, before we can well recollect ourselves, and call up our evidences; and we expect to know the sum or product, before our consciences have had leisure deliberately to cast up their accounts. Yea, when we have set to it, and by diligent search with the best assistances, have discovered our sincerity, and recorded the judgment, if conscience cannot presently recall its proofs, and make it out upon every surprise,

we unjustly question all that is past, and will never rest in any judgment, but are still calling over all again, as if the cause had never been tried. And then the judgment passeth according to our present temper and disposition, when many of the circumstances are forgotten, and many of the witnesses are out of the way, that last assisted us.

2. Perhaps we judge (as I said before) in the fit of a passion of fear or grief, which imperiously overruleth or disturbeth reason: and then no wonder, if in our haste we say, that all men that would comfort us are liars. And if, with David, in the “day of our trouble, our souls do even refuse to be comforted;” and if we remember God, and we are troubled more, and if “our spirit be overwhelmed in us: when he holdeth our eyes waking, and we are so troubled that we cannot speak.” And if we question whether “the Lord will cast off for ever, and will be favourable no more.” Whether “his mercy be clean gone for ever, and his promise fail for evermore:” whether “he hath forgotten to be gracious, and hath shut up his tender mercies in displeasure:” till a calm deliver us from the mistake, and make us say, ‘This is our infirmity,’ we think that God doth cast off our souls, and “hideth his face from us,” when “our soul is full of troubles, and our life draweth nigh unto the grave: when we are afflicted and ready to die from our youth up, and are distracted, while we suffer the terrors of the Lord;” as he complaineth. Passion judgeth according to its nature, and not according to truth.

3. Or perhaps we judge, when our friends, our memory, and other helps are out of the way, and we are destitute of due assistance.

4. Or when our bodies are weak or distempered with melancholy, which representeth all this in black and terrible colours to the soul, and will hear no language but *forsaken, miserable, and undone*. You may as well take the judgment of a man half drunk, or half asleep, about the greatest matters of your lives, as to take the judgment of conscience in such a state of disadvantage, about the condition of your souls.

5. Another hinderance to us, is, that we cannot take comfort from the former sight of grace that we have had, unless we have a continued present sight. And so all our labour in trying, and all our experiences, and all God's former manifestations of himself to the soul are lost, as to our present comfort, when our grace is out of sight: like foolish travellers, that think they are out of the way, and are ready to turn back, when ever any hill doth interpose, and hinder them from seeing the place they go to. As if it were no matter of comfort to us, to say, I did find the evidences of grace; I once recorded a judgment of my sincerity: but the former is still questioned rather than the latter. When, with David, we should "consider the days of old, the years of ancient times, and call to remembrance our songs in the night, and commune with our hearts in such a diligent search," and remembrance of the mercies formerly received.

6. Lastly, The operations of man's soul are naturally so various, and, from corruption, are so confused and so dark, that we are oftentimes in a maze and at a loss, when we are most desirous to judge aright; and scarcely know where, in so great disorder, to find

any thing that we seek; and know it not when we find it: so that our hearts are almost as strange to themselves as to one another; and sometimes more confident of other men's sincerity than our own, where there is no more matter for our confidence.

CHAPTER IX.

Motives to labour to Know our Sanctification.

HAVING thus showed you the causes of our ignorance of our sanctification, I shall briefly tell you some reasons that should move you to seek to be acquainted with it, where it is.

1. The knowledge of God is the most excellent knowledge: and therefore the best sort of creature-knowledge is, that which hath the most of God in it. And undoubtedly there is more of God in holiness, which is his image, than in common things. Sins and wants have nothing of God in them; they must be fathered on the devil and yourselves, and therefore the knowledge of them is good but by accident, because the knowledge even of evil hath a tendency to good: and therefore it is commanded and made our duty, for the good which it tendeth to. It is the Divine nature and image within you, which hath the most of God; and therefore to know this, is the high and noble knowledge. To know Christ within us, is our happiness on earth, in order to the knowledge of him in glory "face to face," which is the happiness of heaven. To "know God,

though darkly through a glass," and but in part, is far above all creature-knowledge. The knowledge of him raiseth, quickeneth, sanctifieth, enlargeth, and advanceth all our faculties. It is "life eternal to know God in Christ." Therefore, where God appeareth most, there should our understandings be most diligently exercised in study and observation.

2. It is a most delightful felicitating knowledge, to know that Christ is in you. If it be delightful to the rich to see their wealth, their houses, and lands, and goods, and money: and if it be delightful to the honourable to see their attendance, and hear their own commendations and applause; how delightful must it be to a true believer to find Christ within him, and to know his title to eternal life? If the knowledge of "full barns," and "much goods laid up for many years," can make a sensual worldling say, "Soul, take thy ease, eat, drink and be merry," methinks the knowledge of our interest in Christ and heaven, should make us say, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased." "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." If we say, with David, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee," much more may we say, Blessed are they in whom Christ dwelleth, and the Holy Ghost hath made his temple, they should be still praising thee. "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." But this is upon supposition, that he be first blessed by Christ's approach to him, and dwelling in him.

If you ask, ‘How is it that Christ dwelleth in us;’ I answer, 1. Objectively, as he is apprehended by our faith and love: as the things or persons that we think of, and love and delight in, are said to dwell in our minds or hearts. 2. By the Holy Ghost, who, as a principle of new and heavenly life, is given by Christ the head, unto his members; and as the agent of Christ doth illuminate, sanctify, and guide the soul. “He that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” That of Ephes. iii. 17. may be taken in either, or both senses comprehensively, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.”

3. Did you know that Christ is in you by his Spirit, it might make every place and condition comfortable to you! If you are alone, it may rejoice you to think what company dwelleth continually with you in your hearts. If you are wearied with evil company without, it may comfort you to think that you have better within: when you have communion with the saints, it is your joy to think that you have nearer communion with the Lord of saints. You may well say with David, “When I awake, I am still with thee.” “I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.”

4. Did you know Christ within you, it would much help you in believing what is written of him in the gospel. Though to the ungodly the mysteries of the kingdom of God do seem incredible, yet when you have experience of the power of it on your souls, and find the image of it on your hearts,

and the same Christ within you conforming you to what he commandeth in his word, this will work such a suitableness to the gospel in your hearts as will make the work of faith more easy. Saith the Apostle, “ We have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world:” (there is their outward experience;) “ and we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him:” (there is their faith confirmed by their inward evidenee: no wonder if they that have God dwelling in them by holy love, do believe the love that God hath to them.) This is the great advantage that the sanetified have in the work of faith, above those that much exeel them in disputing, and are furnished with more arguments for the Christian verity: Christ hath his witness abiding in them. “ The fruits of the Spirit bear witness to the incorruptible seed, the word of God, that liveth and abideth for ever.” The impress on the heart bears witness to the seal that caused it. Labour to know the truth of your sanetification, that you may be confirmed by it in the truth of the word that sanctifieth you, and may “ rejoyce in him that hath chosen you to salvation, through sanetification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.”

5. If you can come to the knowledge of Christ within you, it will be much casier to trust upon him, and fly to him in all your particuler necessities, and to make use of his mediatorship with holy confidence. When others fly from Christ with trembling, and know not whether he will speak for them, or help them, but look at him with strange and doubtful

thoughts, it will be otherwise with you that have assurance of his continual love and presenee. When you find Christ so near you, as to dwell within you, (and so particular and abundant is his love to you, as to have given you his Spirit, and all his graces,) it will produce a sweet delightful boldness, and make you run to him as your help and refuge, in all your neecessities. When you find the great promise fulfilled to yourselves, “I will put my laws in their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more:” you will “have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God, you may draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having your hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,” (or the conscience of evil) “as your bodies are washed” (in baptism) “with pure water.” “In Christ we may have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of him.” This intimate acquaintance with our great High Priest that is “passed into the heavens,” and yet abideth and reigneth in our hearts, will encourage us to “hold fast our profession, and to come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” When by unfeigned love, we “know that we are of the truth, and may assure our hearts before him, and our heart condemneth us not, then we have confidence towards God; and whatever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”

6. When once you know that you have Christ within you, you may cheerfully proceed in the way of life; when doubting Christians, that know not whether they are in the way or not, are still looking behind them, and spend their time in perplexed fears, lest they are out of the way, and go on with heaviness and trouble, as uncertain whether they may not lose their labour; and are still questioning their groundwork, when the building should go on. It is an unspeakable mercy, when a believing soul is freed from these distracting hindering doubts, and may boldly and cheerfully hold on his way, and be walking or working, when other men are fearing and inquiring the way; and may, with patience and comfort, wait for the reward, the crown of life, when others are still questioning, whether they were ever regenerate, and whether their hopes have any ground. We may be “steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, when we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.” We may then “gird up the loins of the mind, and in sobriety hope unto the end, for the grace that is to be brought us, at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

7. When you are assured that you have Christ within you, it may preserve you from those terrors of soul that affright them that have no such assurance. O! he that knoweth what it is to think of the intolerable wrath of God, and says, ‘I fear I am the object of this wrath, and must bear this intolerable load everlastingly,’ may know what a mercy it is to be assured of our escape. He that knows what it is to think of hell, and say, ‘I know not but those endless flames may be my portion,’

will know what a mercy it is to be assured of a deliverance, and to be able to say, "I know I am saved from the wrath to come;" and that "we are not of them that draw back to perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul;" and that "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him:" we may "comfort ourselves together, and edify one another," when we have this assurance.

They that have felt the burden of a wounded spirit, and know what it is to feel the terrors of the Lord, and to see hell-fire, as it were, before their eyes, and to be kept waking by the dreadful apprehensions of their danger, and to be pursued daily by an accusing conscience, setting their sins in order before them, and bringing the threatenings of God to their remembrance; these persons will understand, that to be assured of a Christ within us, and, consequently, of a Christ that is preparing a place of glory for us, is a mercy that the mind of man is now unable to value, according to the ten thousandth part of its worth.

8. Were you assured that Christ himself is in you, it would sweeten all the mercies of your lives. It would assure you, that they are all the pledges of his love; and love in all, would be the kernel and the life of all. Your friends, your health, your wealth, your deliverances, would be steeped in the dearest love of Christ, and have a spiritual sweetness in them, when to the worldling they have but a carnal, unwholesome, luscious sweetness; and to

the doubting Christians, they will be turned into troubles, while they are questioning the love and meaning of the Giver; and whether they are sent for good to them, or to aggravate their condemnation; and the company of the Giver will advance your estimation of the gift. To have money in your purses, and goods in your houses, and books in your studies, and friends in your near and sweet society, are all advanced to the higher value, when you know that you have also Christ in your hearts; and that all these are but the attendants of your Lord, and the fruits that drop from the tree of life, and the tokens of his love, importing greater things to follow. Whereas, in the crowd of all those mercies, the soul would be uncomfortable, or worse, if it missed the presence of its dearest friend: and in the midst of all, would live but as in a wilderness, and go seeking after Christ with tears, as Mary at his sepulchre, because they had "taken away her Lord, and she knew not where they had laid him." All mercies would be bitter to us, if the presence of Christ do not put into them that special sweetness which is above the estimate of sense.

9. This assurance would do much to preserve you from the temptation of sensual delight. While you had within you the matter of more excellent contentment, and when you find that these inferior pleasures are enemies to those which are your happiness and life, you would not be easily taken with the bait. The poorest brutish pleasures are made much of by them that never were acquainted with any better. But after the sweetness of assurance of the love of God, how little relish is there to be

found in the pleasures that are so valued by sensual unbelievers ! Let them take them for me, saith the believing soul ; may I but still have the comforts of the presence of my Lord, how little shall I miss them ! How easily can I spare them ! Silver will be cast by, if it be set in competition with gold. The company of common acquaintance may be acceptable, till better and greater come ; and then they must give place. Men that are taken up with the pleasing entertainment of Christ within them, can scarcely afford any more than a transient salutation or observance to those earthly things that are the felicity of the carnal mind, and take up its desires, endeavours, and delight ; when the soul is tempted to turn from Christ, to those deceiving vanities that promise him more content and pleasure, the comfortable thoughts of the love of Christ, and his abode within us, and our abode with him, do sensibly scatter and confound such temptations. The presence of Christ, the great reconciler, doth reconcile us to ourselves, and make us willing to be more at home. He that is out of love with the company that he hath at home, is easily drawn to go abroad. But who can endure to be much abroad, that knoweth of such a guest as Christ at home ? We shall say as Peter, “ Lord, to whom shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” And as when he saw him in a little of his glory, “ Master, it is good for us to be here.” And if the riches of the world were offered to draw a soul from Christ, that hath the knowledge of his special love and presence, the

tempter would have no better entertainment than Simon Magus had with Peter, Their money perish with them, that think Christ and his graces to be no better than money.

10. How easy and sweet would all God's service be to you, if you were assured that Christ abideth in you ! What delightful access might you have in prayer, when you know that Christ himself speaks for you ! Not as if the Father himself were unwilling to do us good, but that he will do it in the name, and for the sake and merits of his Son : which is the meaning of Christ in those words, which seem to deny his intercession, " At that day ye shall ask in my name : and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you ; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me." I appeal to your own hearts, Christians, whether you would not be much more willing and ready to pray, and whether prayer would not be a sweeter employment to you, if you were sure of Christ's abode within you, and intercession for you, and, consequently, that all your prayers are graciously accepted of the Lord ? You would not then desire the vain society of empty persons ; nor seek for recreation in their insipid, frothy, insignificant discourse. The opening of your heart to your heavenly Father, and pleading the merits of his Son, in your believing petitions for his saving benefits, would be a more contenting kind of pleasure to you.

How sweet would meditation be to you, if you could still think on Christ, and all the riches of his kingdom, as your own ! Could you look up to heaven, and say, with grounded confidence, ' It is

mine, and there I must abide and reign for ever !' Could you think of the heavenly host, as those that must be your own companions, and of their holy employment as that which must be your own for ever, it would make the assent of your minds to be more frequent, and meditation to be a more pleasant work. Were you but assured of your special interest in God, and that all his attributes are, by his love and covenant, engaged for your happiness, experience would make you say, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul." "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord." Could you say, with full assurance, that you are the children of the promises, and that they are all your own; how sweet would the reading and meditation on the Holy Scriptures be to you! How dearly would you love the word! What a treasure would you judge it! "Your delight would be then in the law of the Lord, and you would meditate in it day and night." To find such grounds of faith, and hope, and riches of consolation in every page, and assuredly to say, 'All this is mine,' would make you better understand why David did indite all the exix. Psalm, in high commendations of the word of God, and would make you join in his affectionate expressions, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou, through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me."

Sermons, also, would be much sweeter to you,

when you could confidently take home the consolatory part, and use our ministry as a help to your faith, and hope, and joy; whereas your doubts and fears, lest you are still unregenerate, will turn all that you hear, or read, or meditate on, into food and fuel for themselves to work upon; and you will gather up all that tends to your disquietude, and say, It is your part; and cast away all that tendeth to your consolation, and say, It belongeth not to you. And the most comforting passages of the word will be turned into your discomfort: and the promises will seem to you as none, while you imagine that they are none of yours: and the loss of your peace and comfort will not be the worst: but this will increase your backwardness to duty; and when your delight in the worship of God is gone, your inclination to it will abate, and it will seem a burden to you.

The same I may say of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. How sweet will it be to you, if you are assured, that the same Christ that is there represented as broken and bleeding for your sins, doth dwell within you by his Spirit! What welcome entertainment would you expect to find, if you knew that you brought the feast, and the Master of the feast, with you, in your hearts; and had there entirely entertained him, with whom you expect communion in the sacrament! How boldly and comfortably would your hungry souls then feed upon him! With what refreshing acts of faith would you there take the sealed promise and pardon of your sins! Whereas, when you come in fears and doubting, and must take the body and blood of

Christ, in their representations, with your hand and mouth, while you know not whether you receive him with the heart, and whether you have any special interest in him, O what a damp it casteth on the soul ! How it stiflcth its hopes and joys, and turneth the sacrament, which is appointed for their comfort, into their greater trouble ! It hath many a time grieved me to observe, that no ordinance doth cast many upright souls into greater perplexities, and discouragements, and distresses, than the Lord's Supper ; because they come to it with double reverence, and by the doubtings of their title, and questioning their preparedness, and by their fears of eating and drinking unworthily, their souls are utterly discomposed with perplexing passions, and turned from the pleasant exercise of faith, and the delightful intercourse that they should have with God ; and they are distempered, and put out of relish to all the sweetness of the gospel : and then they are frightened from the sacrament by such sad experiences, and dare come thither no more, for fear of eating judgment to themselves. And should not Christians labour to remove the cause of such miserable, distracting fears, that so much wrong both Christ and them, and to recover their well-grounded peace and comfort ?

11. Your love to God, which is the heart and life of the new creature, doth so much depend upon your knowledge of his love to you, as should make you much more desirous of such a knowledge. Love is the end of faith ; and faith the way to love. So much of love as is in every duty, so much holiness is in it, and no more. Love is the sum of the com-

mandments. It is the fulfilling of the law. Though God loved us first, as purposing our good, before we loved him : and we, therefore, “ love him, because he first loved us,” yet doth he love us by complacency and acceptance, because we love the Father and the Son : “ For the Father himself loved you, because ye loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.” And what will more effectually kindle in you the fervent love of Christ, than to know that he loveth you, and dwelleth in you ? All this is expressed by Christ himself : “ At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.—If a man love me, he will keep my words : and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” “ If any man love God, the same is known of him,” with a knowledge of special love and approbation. This is no disparagement to faith, whose nature and use is to work by love. What a man loveth, such he is. The love is the man. Our love is judged by our life, as the cause by the effect : but the life is judged by the love, as the fruits by the tree, the effects of the cause. If Plato could say, “ To be a philosopher, is to love God,” much more should we say, ‘ This is the doctrine and work of a Christian, even the love of God.’ Indeed it is the work of the Redeemer to recover the heart of man to God, and to bring us to love him, by representing him to us as the most amiable, suitable object of our love :

and the perfection of love is heaven itself. “The yoke of holy love, O how sweetly dost thou surprise! How gloriously dost thou enthrall! How pleasantly dost thou press! How delightfully dost thou load! How strongly dost thou bind! How prudently dost thou instruct!—O happy love, from which ariseth the strength of manners, the purity of affections, the subtilty of intellects, the sanctity of desires, the excellency of works, the fruitfulness of virtues, the dignity of deserts, the sublimity of the reward.”—*Bernard*. I appeal to your own consciences, Christians, would you not think it a foretaste of heaven upon earth, if you could but love God as much as you desire? Would any kind of life that you can imagine, be so desirable and delightful to you? Would any thing be more acceptable unto God? And, on the contrary, a soul without the love of God, is worse than a corpse without a soul. “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha.”

And do I need to tell you, what a powerful incentive it is to love, to know that you are beloved? It will make Christ much more dear to you, to know how dear you are to him. What is said of affective love in us, may partly be said of attractive love in Christ. “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it:” no riches can purchase what it can attract. When you find that he hath set you “as a seal upon his arm and heart,” and that you are dear to him as the “apple of his eye,” what holy flames will this kindle in your breast! If it be almost impossible, with your equals upon earth, not to love them that love you, (which Christ telleth

you that even publicans will do,) how much more should the love of Christ constrain us abundantly to love him, when, being infinitely above us, his love descendeth, that ours may ascend ! His love puts forth the hand from heaven to fetch us up.

O Christians, you little know how Satan wrongeth you, by drawing you to deny, or doubt of the special love of God ! How can you love him that you apprehend to be your enemy, and to intend your ruin ? Doubtless, not so easily as if you know him to be your friend. In reason, is there any more likely way to draw you to hate God, than to draw you to believe that he hateth you ? Can your thoughts be pleasant of him, or your speeches of him sweet ? or can you attend him, or draw near him with delight, while you think he hateth you, and hath decreed your damnation ? You may fear him, as he is a terrible avenger ; and you may confess his judgments to be just : but can you amicably embrace the consuming fire, and love to dwell with the everlasting burnings ?

O, therefore, as ever you would have the love of God to animate, and sanctify, and delight your souls, study the greatness of his love to you, and labour, with all possible speed and diligence, to find that Christ, by his Spirit, is within you. It is the whole work of sanctification that Satan would destroy or weaken by your doubts : and it is the whole work of sanctification, that by love would be promoted, if you knew your interest in the love of Christ.

12. It is the knowledge of Christ dwelling in you, and so of the special love of God, that must acquaint you with a life of holy thankfulness and

praise. These highest and most acceptable duties, will be out of your reach, if Satan can hide from you that mercy which must be the chiefest matter of your thanksgiving. Will that soul be in tune for the high praises of the Lord, that thinks he meaneth to treat him as an enemy? Can you look for any cheerful thanksgiving from him that looks to lie in hell? Will he not rather cry, with David, "In death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?" Shall the damned praise thee, or shall they give thee thanks that must be scorched with the flames of thine indignation? Can you expect that joy should be in their hearts, or cheerfulness in their countenances, or praises in their mouths, that think they are reprobated? Undoubtedly Satan is not ignorant, that this is the way to deprive God of the service which is most acceptable to him, and you of the pleasures of so sweet a life. And, therefore, he that envieth both, will do his worst to damp your spirits, and breed uncomfortable doubts and fears, and wrongful suspicions in your minds. Whereas, the knowledge of your interest in Christ, would be a continual store-house of thanksgiving and praise, and teach your hearts as well as your tongues to say, with David, "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.—Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart." "Bless the Lord,

O my soul, and forget not all his benefits : who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases ; who redeemeth thy life from destruction ; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.” “ O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave : thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment ; in his favour is life.” Thanksgiving would be the very pulse and breath of your assurance of Christ dwelling in you. You would say, with Paul, “ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in celestials in Christ. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love. Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved : in whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace ; wherein he hath abounded toward us.” Thus faith and assurance, as they have an unspeakable store to work upon, so it is natural to them to expatiate in the praise of our Redeemer, and to delight in amplifications and commemorations of the ways of grace. Just so doth Peter begin his first epistle, “ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again

unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time: wherein ye greatly rejoice," &c.

No wonder if the heirs of heaven be inclined to the language and the work of heaven. I think there are few of you that would not rejoice, and by your speech and countenance express your joy, if you had assurance but of the dignities and dominions of this world. And can he choose but express his joy and thankfulness, that hath assurance of the crown of life? What fragrant thoughts should possess that mind that knoweth itself to be possessed by the Spirit of the living God! How thankful will he be, that knows he hath Christ and heaven to be thankful for! What sweet delights should fill up the hours of that man's life, that knows the Son of God living in him, and that he shall live in joy with Christ for ever! How gladly will he be exercised in the praises of his Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, that knows it must be his work for ever! No wonder if this joy be a stranger to their hearts, that are strangers to Christ, or strangers to their interest in his love. No wonder if they have no hearts for these celestial works, that have no part in the celestial inheritance, or that know not that they have any part therein.

But to that man that is assured of Christ within him, heaven and earth, and all their store, do offer themselves as the matter of his thanks, and do furnish him with provisions to feed his praises. What

a shame is it, that an assured heir of heaven should be scant and barren in comfort to himself, or in thanks and praise to Jesus Christ, when he hath so much love and merey to fetch his motives from, and hath two worlds to furnish him with the most precious materials; and hath no less than Infinite Goodness, even God himself, to be the subject of his praise! “O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever. Let Israel say, let the house of Aaron say, let them that fear the Lord say, that his mercy endureth for ever.” The knowledge of our interest fitteth us for his praise. “Thou art my God, and I will praise thee; thou art my God, I will exalt thee.” “O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord.” “His praise is for the congregation of his saints. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.” “Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven. He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him.” “I will also clothe his priests with salvation, and his saints shall shout aloud for joy.” Praise is a work so proper for the saints, and thanksgiving must be fed with the knowledge of your mercies, that Satan well knoweth what he shall get by it, and what you will lose, if he can but hide your mercies from you. The height of his malice is against the Lord, and the next is against you: and how can he show it

more than by drawing you to rob God of his thanks and praise, when he hath blessed and enriched you with the chiefest of his mercies ! Labour, therefore, Christians, to know that you have that grace that may be the matter and cause of so sweet and acceptable an employment as the praises of your Lord.

13. Moreover, you should consider, that, without the knowledge of your interest in Christ, you cannot live to the honour of your Redeemer, in such a measure as the gospel doth require. The excellency of gospel-mercies will be veiled and obscured by you, and will not be revealed and honoured by your lives. Your low and poor dejected spirits will be a dishonour to the faith and hope of the saints, and to the glorious inheritance, of which you have so full a prospect in the promises. The heirs of heaven, that know not themselves to be such, may live like the heirs of heaven as to uprightness and humility, but not in the triumphant joy, nor in the courageous boldness, which becometh a believer. What an injury and dishonour is it to our Redeemer, that when he hath done and suffered so much to make us happy, we should walk as heavily as if he had done nothing for us at all ! And when he hath so fully secured us of everlasting happiness, and told us of it so expressly, that our joy may be full, we should live as if the gospel were not the gospel, and such things had never been promised or revealed ! When heaven is the object, and the promise of God is the groundwork of our faith, we should live above all earthly things, as having the honours and pleasures of the world under our feet, accounting all as

“loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ,” whom we should love, though “we have not seen him; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we should rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, as those that must receive the end of their faith, the salvation of our souls.” And how can we do this, if we are still questioning the love of Christ, or our interest in it!

Believers should, with undaunted resolution, charge through the armies of temptation, and conquer difficulties, and suffer for the name of Christ with joy; accounting it a blessed thing to be persecuted for righteousness’ sake, because “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Because of the greatness of the reward, they should “rejoice and be exceeding glad.” And how can they do this, that believe not that the reward and kingdom will be theirs!

The joys of faith and confidence on the promise and strength of Christ, should overcome all inordinate fears of man: “For he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is [my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” And how can we do this, while we are questioning our part in Christ, and the promise that we should thus boldly trust upon?

14. Lastly, consider, that the knowledge of your part in Christ, may make all sufferings easy to you. You will be so much satisfied in God your portion, as will abate the desires, and drown the joys and sorrows of the world. You will judge the “sufferings of this present time unworthy to be compared to

the glory that shall be revealed in us." You will choose rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world, as having respect to the recompense of the reward." All this must be done, and will be done by true believers, that have an assurance of their own sincerity; they must and will forsake all, and take up the cross and follow Christ, in hope of a reward in heaven, as it is offered them in the gospel, when they know their special interest in it. For these are Christ's terms, which he imposeth on all that will be his disciples. But you may certainly perceive, that it will be much more easy to part with all, and undergo and do all this, when we have the great encouragement of our assured interest, than when we have no more but the common offer. To instance in some particulars.

1. Do you live where serious godliness is derided, and you cannot obey the word of God, and seek first the kingdom of God, and its righteousness, without being made the common scorn, and the daily jest and by-word of the company? Let it be so: if you know that you have Christ within you, and are secured of the everlasting joys, will you feel, will you regard such things as these? Shall the jest of a distracted, miserable fool, abate the joy of your assured happiness? Princes and noblemen will not forsake their dominions or lordships, nor cast away the esteem and comfort of all they have, because the poor do ordinarily reproach them as proud, unmerciful oppressors. They think they may bear the words of the miserable, while they have the pleasure

of prosperity. And shall not we give losers leave to talk? We will not be mocked out of the comfort of our health or wealth, our habitations or our friends: and shall we be mocked out of the comfort of Christ, and of the presence of the Comforter himself? If they that are sick deride you for being well, this will but make you more sensible of your felicity, and pity them that have added such folly to their wants: so will it increase the sense of your felicity, to find that you are possessed of so unspeakable a mercy, which others have not so far tasted of as to know its worth. If you are in your Father's arms, you may bear the scorns of such as stand without the doors.

2. If you have the contradictions and opposition of the ignorant or malicious, speaking evil of things they know not, and persuading you from the ways of righteousness, how easily may all this be borne while you have Christ within you to strengthen and encourage you! Had you but his example before you, who is "the Author and Finisher of your faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, it should keep you from being weary and fainting in your minds." But when you have his presence, his Spirit, and his help, how much should it corroborate and confirm you!

3. How easy may you bear the slanders of your own or the gospel's enemies, as long as you are sure of your interest in Christ! How easily may you suffer them to call you by their own names, "pestilent fellows, and movers of sedition among the

people, ringleaders of a sect, profaners of the temple," as Paul was called, as long as you have Christ within you, that was called Beelzebub for your sakes. Your Judge, that must finally decide the case, is your dearest friend, and dwelleth in you. It is "He that will justify you; who is he that condemneth you?" His approbation is your life and comfort. How inconsiderable is it as to your own felicity, what mortal worms shall say or think of you? What if they call you all that is naught, and stain your names, and obscure your innocency, and make others believe the falsest accusations that Satan can use their tongues to utter of you? You have enough against all this within you. What if you go for hypocrites, or what malignity can call you, until the day of judgment? As long as you have so good security of being then fully cleared of all, and your righteousness vindicated by your Judge, how easily may you now bear the slanders of men, that prove themselves wicked, by falsely affirming it of you! You may well endure to be called proud, while you are humble; and factious, while you are lovers of unity and peace; or hypocrites, while you are sincere. How boldly may you say, with the prophet, "The Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? Lo, they shall all wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up."

Had you but Paul's assurance and experience of Christ dwelling in you, you might imitate him in a holy contempt of all the slanders and revilings of the world: "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ: we are weak, but ye are strong: ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour, we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." Thus may we "do and suffer all things through Christ that strengtheneth us." What matter is it what men call us, if God call us his children and friends, and Christ be not ashamed to call us brethren? With us it will be a very small thing to be judged of man, while we know "the Lord that must judge us, is on our side." It lieth not on our hands to justify ourselves: it is Christ that hath undertaken to answer for us; and made it the work of his office to justify us; and to him we may boldly and comfortably leave it: and let all the accusers prepare their charge, and deal with him, and do their worst.

4. How easily may you bear imprisonment, banishment, or other persecution, as long as you are assured of the love of Christ! Can you fear to dwell where Christ dwells with you? If he will go with you through fire and water, what need you

fear? Those owning, appropriating words, will make us venture upon the greatest perils, “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt:—For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.” Who would not, with Peter, cast himself into the sea, or walk with confidence upon the waters, if Christ be there, and call us to him?

The eleventh chapter to the Hebrews doth recapitulate the victories of faith, and show us what the hope of unseen things can cause believers patiently to undergo. How cheerfully will he endure the foulest way, that is assured to come safe to such a home? What will a man stick at, that knows he is following Christ to heaven; and knoweth that he “shall reign with him, when he hath suffered with him?” He is unworthy of Christ, and of salvation, that thinks any thing in the world too good to lose for them. What matter is it, whether death finds us in honour or dishonour, in our own country or in another, at liberty or in prison, so we are sure it finds us not in a state of death? Who would not rather pass to glory by as straight a way as John the Baptist, Stephen, or other martyrs did, than with their persecutors, to prosper in the way to misery? Who can, for shame, repine at the loss of temporal commodities, that is secured of the eternal joys? If assurance of the love of God, would not embolden you to patient suffering, and to lay

down life and all for Christ, what do you think should ever do it?

But when you are afraid lest death will turn you into hell, what wonder if you timorously draw back? When you know not whether ever you shall have any better, no wonder if you are loath to part with the seeming happiness which you have. Those doubts and fears enfeeble the soul, and spoil you of that valour that becomes a soldier of Christ.

5. All personal crosses in your estates, your families, your friends, your health, will be easily borne, if you are once assured of your salvation. To a man that is passing into heaven, all these are most inconsiderable things. What is Lazarus the worse now for his sores or rags? Or what is the rich man the better for his sumptuous attire and fare? Whether you be poor or rich, sick or sound; whether you are used kindly or unkindly in the world, are questions of so small importance, that you are not much concerned in the answer of them: but whether you have Christ within you, or be reprobates; whether you are the heirs of the promise, or are under the curse, are questions of everlasting consequence.

6. Lastly, You may comfortably receive the sentence of death, when once you are assured of the life of grace, and that you have escaped everlasting death. Though nature will be still averse to a dissolution, yet faith will make you cheerfully submit, "desiring to depart and be with Christ," as the best condition for you. When you "know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, you have a building of God, an house not made with

hands, eternal in the heavens;" you will then "groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with your house, which is from heaven: not to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. This God doth work you for, who giveth you the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore, as men that know, while you are at home in the body, you are absent from the Lord; and that walk by faith, and not by sight, you would be always confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord."

Though it be troublesome to remove your dwelling, yet you would not stick upon the trouble, if you were sure to change a cottage for a court: nor would you refuse to cross the seas, to change a prison for a kingdom. The holy desires of believers, do prepare them for a safe death; but it is the assurance of their future happiness, or the believing expectation of it, that must prepare them for a death that is safe and comfortable. The death of the presumptuous may be quiet, but not safe: the death of doubting, troubled believers may be safe, but not quiet: the death of the ungodly, that have awakened, undeceived countenances, is neither safe nor quiet: but the death of strong believers, that have attained assurance, is both. And he that findeth Christ within him, may know, that when he dieth, he shall be with Christ: his dwelling in us by faith, by love, and by his Spirit, is a pledge that we shall dwell with him. Christ within us, will certainly carry us unto Christ above us. . Let Socinians question the happiness of such departed souls, or doubt whether they be in heaven before the resurrection; I am

sure that they are with Christ, as the forecited places show, (2 Cor. v. 7, 8. Philip. i. 23.) and many other. We are following him, that when he had conquered death, and went before us, did send that message to his doubting, troubled disciples, (which is to me so full of sweetness, that methinks I can scarcely too often recite it,) “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” O piercing, melting words, which methinks do write themselves upon my heart, whenever I read them with attention and consideration! Know once that you are his brethren, and that his Father is your Father, and his God is your God, and that he is ascended and glorified in your nature; and then how can you be unwilling to be dismissed from the bondage of this flesh, and be with Christ! For in his “Father’s house are many mansions! and he is gone before to prepare a place for us; and will come again and receive us unto himself, that where he is, there we may be also.” And that this is his will for all his servants, he hath declared in that comfortable promise, (which also I have found so full of sweetness, that I value it above all the riches of the world,) “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man will serve me, him will my Father honour.” The Spirit of Christ within you, is the earnest of all this. Be assured of your faith, and hope, and love, and you may be assured to possess the good believed, and hoped for, and loved. “The incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever,” of which you are new born, doth tend to the “incorruptible crown,

even the crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge will give to all that love his appearing." "And so shall we ever be with the Lord," as the Apostle comfortably speaks, and seasonably annexeth the use of such a cordial, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Whether we are to die by the decay of nature, or by the storm of any violent disease, or by the hand of persecutors, or any other instruments of Satan, the difference is small; they are but several ways of landing at the shore of happiness, which we were making towards, through all the duties and difficulties of our lives. May I die assured of the love of God, how little regardable is it, whether I be poor or rich till then; or in what manner death shall do its execution? And how little cause have blessed souls to envy them that are left on earth, in a quiet and prosperous passage to damnation!

And what an ease and pleasure is this to a man's mind through all his life, to be able, with well-grounded comfort, to think of death! What cares can vex him that hath secured his everlasting state? What losses should afflict him that is sure he shall not lose his soul, and is sure to gain eternal life? What fears should disquiet him that is sure to escape the wrath of God? What wants should trouble him that knoweth he is an heir of heaven? Why should the indignation or threatenings of man, be any temptation to turn him out of the way of duty, or dismay his mind, who knoweth that they can but "kill the body," and dismiss the soul into his blessed presence, whom it loveth, and laboureth and longs to see? What should inordinately grieve

that man that is certain of eternal joy? What else should he thirst for, that hath "in him the well of living waters, springing up to everlasting life?" And what should deprive that man of comfort, that knoweth he hath the Comforter within him, and shall be for ever comforted with his Master's joy? And what should break the peace and patience of him that is assured of everlasting rest? If the assurance of a happy death cannot make it welcome, and cannot make affliction easy, and fill our lives with the joys of hope, I know not what can do it.

But, alas for those poor souls that know not whither death will send them, or, at least, have not good grounds of hope! what wonder if, "through the fear of death, they be all their lifetime subject to bondage?" Methinks, in the midst of their wealth and pleasure, they should not be so stupid as to forget the millions that are gone before them, that lately were as jovial and secure as they; and how short their dreaming feast will be. Methinks at any time it should damp their mirth, and allay the ebullition of their frenetic blood, to remember, 'For all this I must die,' and it may be "this night, that the fool must deliver up his soul; and then, whose shall those things be which he hath provided?" Then who shall be the lord, and who the knight or gentleman? Methinks, Solomon's memento should bring them to themselves. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." And as the sound

of these words, ‘ I must shortly die,’ methinks should be always in your ears; so in reason, the question, ‘ Whither I must then go?’ should be always, as it were, before your eyes, till your souls have received a satisfactory answer to it. O what an amazing dreadful thing it is, when an unsanctified, unprepared soul must say, ‘ I must depart from earth, but I know not whither ! I know not whether unto heaven or hell; here I am now, but where must I be for ever?’ When men believe that their next habitation must be everlasting, methinks the question, ‘ Whither must I go?’ should be day and night upon their minds, till they can say, upon good grounds, ‘ I shall go to the blessed presence of the Lord.’ O had you but the hearts of men within you, methinks the sense of this one question, ‘ Whither must I go when I leave the flesh?’ should so possess you, that it should give your souls no rest till you are able to say, ‘ We shall be with Christ, because he dwelleth in us here, and hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of his Spirit;’ or at least, till you have good hopes of this, and have done your best to make it sure.

And thus I have told you of how great importance it is to believers, to attain assurance of the love of God, and to know that Christ abideth in them. And now I think you will confess, I have proved the necessity of self-knowledge, both to the unregenerate and the regenerate, though in several degrees: and having opened the disease, and showed you the need of a remedy, I am next to direct you in the application for the cure.

CHAPTER X.

External Hinderances of Self-Acquaintance.

I DOUBT not but there are many that, by this time, are desirous to be instructed, how this self-knowledge may be attained: for whose satisfaction, and for the reducing of all that hath been spoken into practice, I shall next acquaint you with the hinderances of self-knowledge (the removing of them being not the least point in the cure), and with the positive directions to be practised for the attainment of it. And because the hinderances and helps are contrary, I shall open both together as we go on.

The hinderances of self-knowledge are some of them without us, and some within us; and so must be the helps.

I. The external hinderances are these.

1. The failing of ministers in their part of the work, through unskilfulness or unfaithfulness, is a great cause that so many are ignorant of themselves. They are the lights of the world; and if they are eclipsed, or put under a bushel; if they are darkened by the snuff of their own corruptions; or if they feed not their light by the oil of diligent studies, and other endeavours; or if they will not go along with men into the dark and unknown corners of the heart, what wonder if men's hearts remain in darkness, when those that, by office, are appointed to afford them light, do fail them? It is not a general dull discourse, or critical observations upon

words, or the subtle decision of some nice and curious questions of the schools, nor is it a neat and well-composed speech, about some other distant matters, that is likely to acquaint a sinner with himself. How many sermons may we hear, that are levelled at some mark or other, that is very far from the hearers' hearts, and, therefore, are never likely to convince them, or open and convert them? And if our congregations were in such a case, as that they needed no closer quickening work, such preaching might be borne with and commended; but when so many usually sit before us, that must shortly die, and are unprepared, and that are condemned by the law of God, and must be pardoned or finally condemned; that must be saved from their sins, that they may be saved from everlasting misery, I think it is time for us to talk to them of such things as most concern them; and that in such a manner as may most effectually convince, awaken, and change them. When we come to them on their sick-beds, we talk not then to them of distant or impertinent things, but of the state of their souls, and their appearing before the Lord, and how they may be ready, that death may be both safe and comfortable to them: (though a superstitious miserable fellow, that knoweth no better things himself, may talk to the sick of beads, and relics, and of being on this side or that, for this ceremony or the other, and may think to conjure the unholy spirit out of him, by some affected words of devotions, uttered from a graceless, senseless heart; or to command him out by papal authority, as if they would charm his soul to heaven, by saying over some lifeless forms, and

using the gospel as a spell; yet ministers indeed, that know themselves what faith and what repentance is, and what it is to be regenerate, and to be prepared to die, do know that they have other work to do.) The gospel offereth men their choice, whether they will have holiness or sin; and to be ruled by Christ, or by their fleshly lusts; and so whether they will have spiritual or carnal, eternal, or transitory joys. And our work is to persuade them to make that choice which will be their happiness, and which eternal joy depends upon; whether we come to them in sickness or in health, this is our business with them. A man that is ready to be drowned, is not at leisure for a song or dance: and a man that is ready to be damned, methinks should not find himself at leisure to hear a man show his wit and reading only, if not his folly and malice against a life of holiness: nor should you think that suitable to such men's case, that doth not evidently tend to save them. But, alas, how often have we heard such sermons, as tend more to diversion than direction, to fill their minds with other matters, and find men something else to think on, lest they should study themselves, and know their misery! A preacher that seems to speak religiously, by a sapless, dry discourse, that is called a sermon, may more plausibly and easily divert him: and his conscience will more quietly suffer him to be taken off the necessary care of his salvation, by something that is like it, and pretends to do the work as well, than by the grosser avocations, or the scorns of fools: and he will more tamely be turned from religion, by something that is called religion, and which he hopes

may serve the turn, than by open wickedness, or impious defiance of God and reason. But how oft do we hear applauded sermons, which force us, in compassion to men's souls, to think, O what is all this to the opening a sinner's heart unto himself, and showing him his unregenerate state ! What is this to the conviction of a self-deluding soul, that is passing unto hell with the confident expectations of heaven ! To the opening of men's eyes, and turning them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God ! What is this to show men their undone condition, and the absolute necessity of Christ, and of renewing grace ! What is in this to lead men up from earth to heaven, and to acquaint them with the unseen world, and to help them to the life of faith and love, and to the mortifying and the pardon of their sins ! How little skill have many miserable preachers, in the searching of the heart, and helping men to know themselves, whether Christ be in them, or whether they be reprobates ! And how little care and diligence are used by them to call men to the trial, and help them in the examining and judging of themselves, as if it were a work of no necessity ! “ They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace, saith the Lord.” “ Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar: say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. Lo,

when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it?"

It is a plain and terrible passage, "He that saith to the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse; nations shall abhor him." Such injustice in a judge, or witnesses, is odious, that determine but in order to temporal rewards or punishments. But in a messenger that professeth to speak to men in the name of God, and in the stead of Jesus Christ, when the determination hath respect to the consciences of men, and to their endless joy or torment, how odious and horrid a crime must it be esteemed, to persuade the wicked that he is righteous; or to speak that, which tendeth to persuade him of it, though not in open, plain expressions! What perfidious dealing is this against the Holy God! What an abuse of our Redeemer, that his pretended messengers shall make him seem to judge clean contrary to his holiness, and to his law, and to the judgment which indeed he passeth, and will pass, on all that live and die unsanctified! What vile deceit and cruelty against the souls of men are such preachers guilty of, that would make them believe that all is well with them, or that their state is safe or tolerable, till they must find it otherwise to their woe! What shame, what punishment can be too great for such a wretch, when the neglect and making light of Christ and his salvation, is the common road to hell? And most men perish, because they value not, and use not, the necessary means of their recovery; for a man, in the name of a minister of the gospel, to cheat them into such

undervaluings and neglects, as are likely to prove their condemnation; what is this but to play the minister of Satan, and to do his work, in the name and garb of a minister of Christ? It is a damnable treachery against Christ and against the people's souls, to hide their misery, when it is your office to reveal it; and to let people deceive themselves in the matters of salvation, and not to labour diligently to undeceive them. But some go further, and more openly act the part of Satan, by reproaching the most faithful servants of the Lord, and labouring to bring the people into a conceit, that seriousness and carefulness, in the matters of God and our salvation, are but hypocrisy and unnecessary strictness: and in their company and converse they give so much countenance to the ungodly, and cast so much secret or open scorn upon those that would live according to the Scriptures, as hardeneth multitudes in their impenitency. O dreadful reckoning to these unfaithful shepherds, when they must answer for the ruin of their miserable flocks! How great will their damnation be, which must be aggravated by the damnation of so many others! When the question is, 'How come so many souls to perish?' The answer must be, 'Because they set light by Christ and holiness, which should have saved them.' But what made them set light by Christ and holiness? It was their deceitful confidence, that they had so much part in Christ and holiness, as would suffice to save them, though indeed they were unsanctified strangers to both. They were not practically acquainted with their necessities. But how came they to continue thus ignorant of themselves till it was too late?

Because they had teachers that kept them strange to the nature of true holiness, and did not labour, publicly and privately, to convince them of their undone condition, and drive them to Christ, that by him they might have life. Woe to such teachers that ever they were born, that must then be found under the guilt of such perfidiousness and cruelty ! Had they ever felt themselves, what it is to be pursued by the law of conscience, and with broken hearts to cast themselves on Christ as their only hope and refuge, and what it is to be pardoned, and saved by him from the wrath of God ; and what it is to be sanctified, and to be sensible of all his love, they would take another course with sinners, and talk of sin, and Christ, and holiness, at other rates, and not deceive their people with themselves.

Direct. 1. My first direction, therefore, to you, is in order to the knowledge of yourselves, that, if it be possible, you will live under a faithful, soul-searching, skilful pastor ; and that you will make use of his public and personal help, to bring you, and keep you in continual acquaintance with yourselves.

As there is a double use of physicians ; one general, to teach men the common principles of physie, and the other particular, to apply these common precepts to each individual person as they need : so is there a double use of ministers of the gospel ; one to deliver publicly the common doctrines of Christianity, concerning man's sin and misery, and the remedy, &c. and the other to help people in the personal application of all this to themselves. And they that take up only with the former, deprive themselves of half the benefit of the ministry.

1. In public, how skilful and diligent should we be, in opening the hearts of sinners to themselves ! The pulpit is but our candlestick, from which we should diffuse the holy light into all the assembly; not speaking the same things of all that are before us, as if it were our work to trouble men, or only to comfort them : but, as the same light will show every man the things which he beholdeth, in their varieties and differences, so the same word of truth which we deliver, must be so discovering and discriminating, as to manifest the ungodly to be ungodly, and the carnal to be carnal; the worldling to be a worldling; the hypocrite to be a hypocrite; and the enemies of holiness to be as they are; and the sincere to be sincere; and the renewed soul to be indeed renewed. The same light must show the excellency of sanctification, and the filthiness of sin; the glory of the image of Christ, and the deformity of that spiritual death, which is its privation. It must show the righteous to be “more excellent than his neighbour,” and help men to “discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.” We must not be like the miserable ungodly preachers, that cannot describe the state of grace with clearness and feelingly, because they never knew it; or that dare not discover the unsanctified, lest they detect themselves, nor judge them according to their office, lest they condemn themselves; and that preach to the ungodly as if all were well with them; and they dare not awaken the consciences of others, lest they should awaken and affright their own: and therefore are ready to scorn at all distinguishing preachers, and to take the discovery of

regeneration to be but the boasting of hypocrisy ; as if he that would differ from the most, or did pretend to the special privileges of the saints, did but as the Pharisee, “ Thank God that he is not like other men ;” or say, “ Stand by, I am more holy than thou.” And if these preachers could prove that all men should be saved that will but say they are Christians, they might then have hope of being saved themselves, without that serious piety which they so distaste. No wonder, therefore, if they preach in the language of Korah : “ Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them : wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord ?” But the Lord saith, “ If you take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth : let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.” If you love not differencing preaching, make no difference from the true members of Christ by your hypocrisy or ungodly living ; be such as they, and we shall not difference you from them. Read but the first Psalm, and the fifteenth Psalm, and the third of John, and the eighth to the Romans, and the third Epistle of John ; and then tell me whether the Scripture be not a differencing word, condemning some, and justifying others, and showing the true state of the difference between them. What ! is there no difference between the heirs of heaven and hell ? Or is the difference no more, than that one hath the name of a Christian, and not the other ? O no ! when the dreadful differencing day is come, men shall find that there was another kind of difference between the way of life and death : when many shall say, “ Lord,

Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" To whom Christ will profess, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." When "many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." What a difference will appear between those that now converse together, between whom the world, that judgeth by the outside, discerns but little or no difference! When those things shall be executed that are written in Matt. xxv. and 2 Thess. i. O what a difference will then appear! When of those that were in the same church, the same house, the same shop, the same bed, one shall be taken, and the other left: and the felicity that was hid in the seed of grace, shall shine forth to the astonishment of the world, in the fulness of eternal glory!

I know preachers are ordinarily hated that thus difference between the godly and the ungodly: the very names of difference are matter of scorn to guilty souls, because they imply the matter of their terror. I have often noted this with admiration, in the success of Christ's own doctrine upon the Jews, when he had so preached the gospel, as that he had the testimony of the multitude that wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, yet some were cavilling and believed not; and he saith, "I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three

years, &c. But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, to a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." But how was this differencing doctrine of Christ entertained by the Jews? It is said, "All they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong." Read it, and consider what moved these men to so much rage against Christ himself for preaching this doctrine, which restrained the fruit of the gospel to a few; and then you will not wonder, if those preachers that imitate Christ in this, be used no better than their Master.

But let ministers know that this is their duty, to show every man himself, his deeds, and state, as indeed they are: and let Christians choose and love such ministers. Choose not the glass that makes you fairest, but which is truest, and representeth you to yourselves as God accounteth you; whether he do it with more eloquence or less, with smother or with rougher language: hear him if you may, that will best acquaint you with the truth of your condition, and choose not those that speak not to the heart.

2. And when you have heard the best, the most searching preacher, do not think that now you can do all the rest of the work yourselves, and that you have no further need of help; but make use of their more particular personal advice.

1. In case that, after your most diligent self-examination, you are yet at uncertainty and doubt, whether you are truly sanctified or not, the settling of your states for all eternity, and the well-grounding of your hopes and comforts, is a matter of such unspeakable moment, as that you should not remain in careless, negligent uncertainty, while God hath provided you any further means that may be used for assurance. Yea, if you were not troubled with doubting, yet if you have opportunity of opening your evidences to a judicious, faithful minister or friend, I think it may be worth your labour, for the confirmation of the peace and comforts which you have. You cannot make too sure of everlasting happiness.

2. And not only in the first settling of your peace, but also when any notable assault or dangerous temptation shall afterward shake it, which you cannot overcome without assistance, it is seasonable to betake yourselves to a physician; and also, in case of any dangerous lapse or declining, that hath brought you into a state of darkness.

4. Also, in case of any particular corruption or temptation, your particular inclinations may, cautiously, be opened to a faithful guide, that, by his prudent and lively counsel, you may be strengthened. If you say, ‘To what end do ministers preach to me, and why do I hear them opening the natures of grace and of hypocrisy, if I cannot judge of myself by the doctrine which they preach?’ I answer, 1. You may and must judge yourselves by the public common helps, as far as you are able; but a personal, applying help, added unto this, is a

further advantage. And humility should teach you, not to think better of your understandings than there is cause; nor to think you are so wise as to need but one help, when God hath provided you two. And doth not your own experience convince you? Do you not find, that, after the best public preaching, you are yet in doubt, and at a loss about your spiritual state, and therefore that you have need of further help?

2. I further answer you: There is so great a diversity of particular circumstances in the cases of particular persons, that a great deal of help is necessary to most, to pass a right judgment, when they do understand both the law and the fact. Will you think it enough that you have the statutes of the land, and the law-books, to judge of all your own cases by? Or will you not think that you have also need of the counsel of the wisest lawyer, in your weightiest cases, to help you to judge of your cause by the particular application of the law to it? It is not reading a book only, or hearing a lecture, that can make you as understanding as the masters of the profession. So is it in matters of the soul. When you have heard much, and understand much, you cannot in modesty think that all the sense of Scripture, about those points, is known as exactly to you, as to your most judicious teachers; and that you are as able at once to see all the passages of the word, and of the fact, as may enable you to pass so clear a judgment on it. Perhaps you will say, that you know your own hearts and actions better than they do. I answer, you do so, or should do so; and it is you that they must know it from; and yet, when

you have done, you may not be able to judge of your state by those acts which you say you know. You must show the lawyer all your evidences: he cannot see them, till you show them him; and yet when he seeth them, he can judge of them whether they are good or bad, and of your title by them, better than you can that have the keeping of them, because he better understands the law.

But perhaps you will say, that when you have gone to ministers, and opened your case to them, they cannot resolve you, but you are still in doubt.

I answer, 1. Perhaps when they have resolved them, yet you would not be resolved. Have they not told you the truth, and you would not believe it? Or directed you to remedies which you would not use? They cannot, when they have told you the truth, compel you to believe it; nor when they have told you what will do the cure, they cannot make you use it if you refuse.

2. And what if the nature of the disease be obstinate, and will not be cured easily and at once, but with time, and diligence, and patience? Will you therefore think the means are vain? Must you at once, or in a short time, be resolved, and delivered from all your doubts, about your title to eternal life, or else will you cast off all advice? Should your children learn thus of their teachers, they were likely to make unhappy scholars. As you will not have done with Christ, if he cure you not at once, nor give over praying, if you have not all your desires at once, (if you love yourselves,) so you must not have done with the counsel of your guides, if they satisfy not your doubts at once: as you cease not

hearing them in public, though you have still your doubtings; so why should you cease advising with them personally upon that account? Use God's means, and be thankful, if by degrees they do cure, and prevail at last.

Object. ' But I find it is God only that can speak peace; and therefore it is vain to hang on men.'

I answer, God speaketh by his word and Spirit: his word is to be delivered, expounded, and applied to you by his ministers: if therefore you will have it from God, you must not refuse his own appointed ordinary means. The Spirit comforteth by the promise: as in conversion God useth not to do it by the Spirit, without, but in, and by the ministry of the word, so also in all our directions, and satisfaction and comfort afterwards. As he that will run from the ministry of the word, because it is God that must convert, doth indeed run from God, and is not likely to be converted; so is it in point of assurance and consolation. The teachers of the church "are to be accounted of as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God," "by whom the people have believed;" "not having dominion over their faith, but being helpers of their joy;" "who are comforted in all their tribulations, that they might be able to comfort them that are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith they themselves are comforted of God." They are to be "faithful and wise stewards, whom the Lord maketh rulers over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season." Thus Christ has given "authority to his servants, and appointed to every man his work," and "given pastors and teachers to his

church, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man." These, therefore, being Christ's officers, and this their appointed work, we must receive so much of God's mercies by their hands, as belongeth to their office to administer. "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, then God is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom."

So that you see it is God's way to show to man his uprightness, and to speak peace to souls by his messengers and interpreters that are fitted and authorised thereto.

Object. ' But it is but few that are able thus to discuss the case of unsettled, doubting souls, and to give them clear and safe directions, that may save both from presumption and despair: in many places the ministers are senseless of these things, and unacquainted with the concerns and works of conscience, and have nothing to say to us, unless to deride us as scrupulous and precise; and bid us not trouble our heads about such matters, seeing God is merciful, and Christ died for sinners. They will discourse with us long enough about news, or worldly businesses, or opinions, or controversies; but when we open to them the state of our souls, and desire their advice for the "making our calling and election sure," they have no sense or savour of such discourse: and many ministers that are truly conscientious, are yet so unskilful and so weak, that we

have no encouragement to acquaint them with our state.'

To this I answer: It cannot be denied but all this is too true; and it is matter of lamentation, and must send us to God, with the old petition which Christ himself hath put into our mouths, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

But consider that this is no unusual thing; for all this, there is no nation under heaven, that hath more able, faithful ministers of Christ, than are in these nations. Alas, how much of the church is guided by mere ignorant readers! And how much by superstitious deceivers! Did you know the case of the poor Christians in the Ethiopian, the Greek, and the Roman churches, you would bless God that it is so well with us; even when the church was in a narrower room, yet God complained, "Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto me.—Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people, Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them; behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord.—And I will set up shepherds over them, which shall feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed." Then was the church fain to take up this lamentation,

“Woe is me for my hurt ! my wound is grievous : but I said, Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it. My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken : my children are gone forth of me, and they are not ; there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains. For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the Lord : therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.”

But the voice of healing mercy saith, “Only acknowledge thine iniquity, &c.—Turn, O backsliding children, &c.—and I will give you pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.”

You see, in all other professions, that require not supernatural illumination, there are but few that attain to excellency ; it is but in few that nature layeth the foundation, or giveth that capacity to be excellent, which grace doth elevate and improve.

Take, therefore, the advice of the ablest you can get. I will not persuade you to go always to the minister of your parish, to open the case of your souls, be he fit or unfit ; but to the fittest that you can have access to : the Papists themselves will give men leave to choose others for their confessors. Where there is most of the heavenly illumination, and holy skill in the matters of the soul ; where there is the soundest and most exact judgment, joined with experience and tender compassion, and faithful plainness, and cautious secrecy, there open your hearts, if you have an opportunity, and take the help of such faithful counsellors to acquaint you with yourselves.

Object. ‘ But such ministers being few, and having more of greater work than they can turn them to, are not to be spoken with as oft as my necessity requireth help.’

Answ. Use then the best that are at leisure; and it is not only ministers that you must use, but any other Christian friend that hath such abilities and qualifications, as fit them to assist you: whosoever hath the light, refuse not to come to it; God’s gifts and graces may be helpful to you in a parent, a husband, a neighbour, and not only in a minister.

Quest. ‘ But how far may a dark and doubting person take up and rest in the judgment of a minister, or of others, about the state of his soul, when he is not satisfied himself?’

Answ. This question is of very great use, and therefore the more carefully to be resolved; I shall answer it, therefore, 1. Negatively, and, 2. Affirmatively.

1. No man’s judgment of your state is to be taken as absolutely infallible or divine: nor is man to be believed, as God is, with a divine belief. When they tell you, that ‘ If you are regenerate, you are justified,’ then they do but tell you what God hath told you, and, therefore, this is to be taken as of infallible certainty, not as it is their word, but as it is God’s. So also, when they tell you, that ‘ If you are unconverted, you are not forgiven.’ But when they tell you, that ‘ you are converted or unconverted, pardoned or unpardoned,’ this judgment is not to be taken as infallible or divine.

2. For the bare matter of fact (whether you repent or not; whether you had rather be holy or

unholy, &c.) there is no minister that can know your heart so well as yourselves may know it, except in case when melancholy or passion, or a weakness of understanding on one side, or a wilfulness of presumption on the other side, doth make men judge of their own condition quite contrary to the evidence that appeareth in their lives to others.

3. It is not safe to rest on the judgment of one that is either an enemy or stranger to the workings of a careful, troubled soul; or one that is fond of any private opinion of his own, and layeth out his zeal to form people into his opinion, as if the life of religion lay in that: nor yet of a weak, unskilful man.

4. It is not safe for you to rest much in the judgment of one that knows you not, and is not acquainted of the bent and manner of your lives, but must judge only by the present expressions of your own mouths.

5. It is not safe for you to rest on the judgment of any one single person, when the judgment of most of your judicious acquaintance is contrary to it.

2. Affirmatively, I answer,

1. By a divine faith you are bound to believe all the promises of Scripture that your pastor (or any other) shall acquaint you with.

2. As a disciple of Christ, you are bound to learn the meaning of those promises (and other passages of the Scripture) from your teachers, duly authorised to instruct you: and with such a human belief, as a scholar oweth to his teacher in arts or sciences, you are bound to believe your teachers concerning the meaning of the promises, in cases wherein you are

unable yourselves to understand the word by its proper light and evidence, as well as they; and in case you see no evidence of falsehood in their exposition, nor have any special reason to distrust them. He that will believe nothing that his teacher telleth him, in order to his own understanding, shall never understand by teaching. If you know as much as he already, you need no teacher: if you do not, you must believe him, or else you can never learn of him. But this is not to take him for omniscient, or infallible in himself, but to credit him as a man.

3. You are bound, when he judgeth of your particular case, upon your opening to him the matter of fact, to allow him so much credit as is due to the proportion of his understanding. You tell him how you feel your hearts affected, and what the actions of your lives have been; when you have told it him, he judgeth by God's word, whether this be a state of saving grace which you describe, or not; if upon much stronger parts, or longer study, and more experience, he know more of the meaning of the word, and of the nature of grace, and so be abler to judge than you, modesty requireth that you do in that measure submit your understanding unto his, and believe him according to the measure of his skill, upon supposition that you deceive him not in your information. Even as you will believe a lawyer about your title to your lands, when you have showed him your evidence; or a physician about your disease, when you have told him what you feel.

4. You are bound to add also, all that credit that his honesty and fidelity requireth, if he be a godly man, unwilling to deceive you.

5. And you are bound to add so much belief, as in the case is due to a stander-by that is not blinded by self-love, or partiality, or passions, or any selfish bias, as most men are to themselves.

6. If you are darkened by melancholy, or any other weakening distemper, that maketh you incapable of judging for yourselves, you are bound to allow another so much credit, as the advantage of his sounder understanding, and more composed judgment doth require. If every child, or sick person, will believe nobody that doth not say as they, their self-conceitedness and their distrust of others will be their wrong.

7. In the manner of reception, you are bound to do all this with such a submission as belongeth to an officer of Christ: not that you are to believe any falsehood that he bringeth you, and fathereth upon Christ; nor to put out your own eyes, and see with his; but to learn of him to understand yourselves, and receive what he bringeth you, according to his office.

8. You may yet more boldly and confidently give credit to the judgment of such a minister of Christ, when he is not singular, but speaks according to the concurrent judgment of the generality of able, experienced men: modesty will forbid you to think yourselves wiser than all the able ministers about you.

9. You have the less reason to suspect his judgment, when you may be sure that he is not perverted by any self-interest or self-respect, and frustrateth not the truth for fear of displeasing you, or bringing any discredit or suffering on himself.

10. Lastly, When all these things concur, you

may, with the greater confidence, rest upon his judgment. And though still he is but an imperfect man, and no absolute certainty of your state can be had from his bare judgment, (though from his doctrine, and the effects and signs, there may,) yet such a judgment should weigh very much with you, to the raising of fear and care in the ungodly, and for the quieting of a troubled soul.

Let us now apply this direction to both parties. Beloved, if any of you can look before you to eternity, and do not, with awakened thoughts, conclude, that all probable means should be used in time, to make sure of your final justification at the dreadful day of God, that man wants either the faith of a Christian, or the feeling of a considerate man. Are you all desirous to be sure beforehand, what sentence shall pass upon you then, or are you not? If you are, come on, and let me make a motion that you cannot reasonably refuse: the business is of unspeakable consequence: to be deceived, may be to be undone for ever. Will you advise with those that God hath appointed to give you advice in so great a case? Well then; will you go and faithfully open your state to some able, faithful minister of Christ? Not to an ignorant, carnal, unexperienced man, but to one that is skilled in spiritual affairs, and that will be faithful to you, and deal with that serious gravity and reverence as beseems him that is helping to prepare a soul for the bar of Christ. Will you tell him, whether ever you were convinced of your sin and misery? And whether ever you saw the need of Christ? And whether you have loathed yourselves for your iniquities, and fled

to Christ, as your only refuge from the wrath of God, and have turned away, with resolution, from your former ungodly, careless life, and have changed your company, your business, and your delights? Whether you make it your chief business to please God, and to save your souls? and resolve to take up with the hopes of heaven as your only portion, and not to hazard it for any worldly interest, or fleshly pleasure whatsoever? “Whether in your eyes a vile person be contemned, but you love and honour them that fear the Lord?” Tell these, and other such particulars of your state, to your faithful pastors: answer them to these, and such like questions, and then take their judgment (with the cautions before expressed) of your spiritual state. Hear what they will tell you of it. Might not this course convince thee of thy miserable state, that never hadst any such evidences as these to show? and might it not awaken thee in time, to bethink thee of a safer course? Go to any faithful minister in the world, and tell him the plain truth, that yet thou art a secret fornicator, or drunkard, or flesh-pleaser in some sensual way; or if thou sinnest not so grossly, that yet thou art a formal hypocrite, and hast a secret enmity to those that are most seriously religious, and live the most heavenly lives, and that thou art thyself a stranger to sanctification: and I dare assure thee that he will tell thee, if thou art thus indeed, thou art in the “gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity,” and must be speedily renewed and sanctified, and justified, or thou art undone for ever. I tell thee, there is not a man that is worthy the name of a minister, but will pass this

judgment on the condition of thy soul. And, yet, wilt thou bear it out with a senseless heart, a seared conscience, and a brazen face ; and still live as carelessly as if all were well with thee ! What ! is thy soul of no more worth ? Is it so small a matter with thee, what becometh of thee ? Or is the judgment of able, faithful ministers, in the way of their own office, of no more regard with thee ? They show thee the plain word of God against thee ; and that his threatening contains the virtual sentence of thy condemnation : they are, by office, the interpreters of the law of God to you ; it hath been the study of their lives. Do they pronounce you miserable, as being strangers to the Spirit of Christ ? So they did by themselves, when they saw their sin ; and, therefore, they are impartial : they have had before them multitudes, (alas ! too many,) in your case : and you will regard the judgment of a physician, that hath had many hundreds in hand that had the same disease as you. They are men that are not willing to deceive you. They deny themselves, in telling you of your danger : they know that smoother words would please you better ; and they have natures that desire men's love and favour, rather than displeasure. They are more impartial than you are, and have not your self-interest and passion to blind them : they are not abused in their judgment by the temptations of evil company, or of worldly, fleshly things as you are ; for these temptations more hinder us from judging ourselves than other men. They are the messengers of Christ, appointed to give to each their portion ; and should not their judgment be regarded, in the business committed to their trust ? And it is

not one man or two, or a hundred only, that are of this mind. Open thy case to all the judicious, faithful ministers in the land, and open it truly, and they will all tell thee, that ‘If thou die without converting, sanctifying grace, thou art lost for ever;’ and that all the world cannot save thee from the everlasting wrath of God. Try as many of them as you will, and see if all of them tell you not the same thing. And is all this nothing to thee, presumptuous sinner, that in the judgment of all the most able, faithful ministers of Christ, thy soul should be in a state of death? If all the physicians in the country should tell thee, that ‘Thou hast a disease that will certainly be thy death, unless thou take some one effectual medicine in time,’ I think thou wouldst not slight their judgment, and say, they are too censorious, that thou knowest thy condition better than they. I think it would affright thee to seek after the remedy. And why should not the judgment of the faithful ministers, about the state of thy soul, be so far regarded, as to awaken thee to a more careful inquiry, and stir up a preventing and remedying fear?

O the madness of a hardened sinner! that when he sheweth, by the fruits of an ungodly life, that he is a stranger to sanctification, and liveth in the sins which the Scripture threateneth damnation to, and hath no evidence of true conversion to show, will yet be confident of pardon and salvation, let God and all his ministers say what they will against it! and will rather be offended with his spiritual physicians, for telling him of the danger of his state, and rail at them as if they did him wrong, than he will see his dan-

ger and prevent his misery ! Let such a one hear the word of God, if he have ears to hear, “ Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood, and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst : the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord shall separate him unto evil.”

And, on the other hand, is there any soul among you, that, in doubts, hath opened his case to the faithful ministers of Christ, and their judgment is, that your state is safe ? Is this the judgment, not only of the weakest, but the wisest ; not only of one or two, but of all, or most of the judicious ministers that ever you opened your case to ; even of the most honest and impartial, that would not flatter nor deceive you ? Yea, and perhaps, when desertions, or melancholy, or passion, or ignorance, do make you unmeet to judge of yourselves. And doth all this seem nothing to you ; or a small matter ? It is not nothing ; it is not small. I confess it is no ground of certainty : they are but men : it is a human testimony ; but yet it is a testimony that may weigh down many of your own surmises, and take off much of your distressing fears, and may give much ease to troubled souls, while they are seeking after surer knowledge. It is a ground of comfort, not to be despised, or made light of. Till you can come to

see your evidences yourselves, and to be acquainted with the indwelling Spirit as your witness, you may much quiet your minds, and take much comfort, in this judgment and witness of the servants of the Lord, that have a spirit of discerning, and have that grace which acquainteth them with the nature of grace in others, and that have been long exercised in the discerning of men's states. It is possible a hypocrite (especially one that wilfully giveth them a false relation of himself) may deceive them; but it is probable that it is not one of many they are deceived in, when they know or have a good description of the person. If in a fever, all the ablest physicians tell you the danger is past, it is possible they may be all deceived: but yet, I think, you would take some comfort in such a testimony; so should you here. Though the judgment of ministers be not infallible, it may be much better than your own, though about yourselves; and it may be set against the jealousies and fears of a disquiet soul, and against abundance of the molesting suggestions of the accuser.

I do not, by all this, draw you to lay too much on man; I advance them not too high, and make them not lords of your faith, but helpers of your joy. I bid you not fully and finally rest in the judgment of man; I bid you not neglect any means to come to fuller knowledge, and certainty of your own sincerity. I bid you not forbear any means that tend to the getting of true grace. If you have it, and know it not, the same means may increase it, which you use to get it: and if you have it not, when it is thought you have it, the means may work it, that are intended to increase it. Do all that you can to

repent, believe, and love God, and live to him, whether you ever did these before or not. But yet let the judgment of your faithful pastors, the officers and experienced servants of the Lord, keep off despondency and despair, that would disable you from the use of the means, and would weaken your hands, and make you sit down in unprofitable complaints, and give up all as hopeless. Let their judgment quiet you in the way of duty; lean on them in the dark, till you come into the light. Yea, be glad that you have so much encouragement and hope, from those that are by Christ appointed to subserve the Spirit, in the comforting as well as the sanctifying work, and to show to man his uprightness, and to say to the righteous, "It shall be well with him." I tell you, all the wealth of the world is not worth even this much ground of comfort. Live upon this much, till, by diligent attendance, and waiting on the Spirit of grace and comfort, you can get higher.

2. The second extrinsic hinderance of Self-knowledge is prosperity, and the flattery that usually attendeth it. The one disposeth men to be deceived, and the other putteth the hood over their eyes, and tells them the falsehoods which deceive them.

When men prosper in the world, their minds are lifted up with their estates; and they can hardly believe that they are indeed so ill, while they feel themselves so well; and that so much misery is joined with so much content and pleasure. They cannot taste the bitterness of their sin, and God's displeasure, while the sweetness of worldly delights

and honours is in their mouths. The rich man in Luke xvi. would have given a man but an unwelcome entertainment, that had come to tell him that, within a few days or years, he should lie in hell, and not be able to get a drop of water to cool his tongue ! What need we doubt of that, when his five brethren, that he left on earth behind him, would not be persuaded (to know their danger of those flames, and to use the necessary means to escape them), though one had come to them from the dead ! You plead against their feeling, when you tell them of their misery, when they feel prosperity. And, therefore, it is a matter of lamentable difficulty, to make a prospering sinner well acquainted with his misery. He is drunken with fleshly pleasures and contentments : and when the drink is in a man's head, you can hardly make him sensible of his misery. The devil is therefore willing to reach his servants as full a cup of prosperity as he can, that their drunkenness may keep them from the true use of their reason : for if they once come to themselves, they will come home to God. When misery brought the prodigal to himself, he resolveth presently of going to his father. The bustle of his worldly business, and the vain discourse that is in his ears, and the mirth and sport that takes him up, will not allow him so much of reason, as seriously to consider of his soul's condition. Alas ! when poor men, that must labour all day for food and raiment, can find some time for serious converse with God, and with their consciences, the great ones of the world have no such leisure. How many are going apace towards hell, and say, they cannot have time

to bethink themselves what way they are in, or whether it is that they are going ! That which they have all their time for, they have no time for, because they have no hearts for it. Prosperity doth so please their flesh, that they can give no heed to conscience or reason : it doth so charm their minds, and enslave their wills to sense and appetite, that they cannot endure to be so melancholy, as to prepare for death and judgment, or to consider seriously how this will relish with them at the end ; nor scarcely to remember that they are men, that should rule their senses, and be ruled by God, and that have another life to live.

And as prosperity in itself is so great a hinderance to the knowledge of yourselves, so flatterers, that are the flies of summer, are always ready to blow upon the prosperous, and increase the danger. What miserable men are extolled as wise, and virtuous, and religious, if they be but rich and great ! their vices are masked, or extenuated, and made but little human frailties ; though they were gluttons, or drunkards, or filthy fornicators, or mere flesh-pleasing, sensual brutes, that waste most of their lives in ease and sports, and eating and drinking, and such delights ; yet, with their flatterers, all these shall go for prudent, pious, worthy persons, if they can but seek, when they have done, to mock God and their consciences with some lip-service and lifeless carcase of religion. O happy men, if God would judge of them as their flatterers do ; and would make as small a matter of their wickedness, and as great a matter of their outside, hypocritical, heartless worship ! But they must be greater than men or angels, and

higher than either earth or heaven, before God will flatter them. When they can make him afraid of their high looks or threatenings, or when they can put him in hope of rising by their preferment, then they may look that he should comply with their parasites, and compliment with his enemies, and justify the ungodly; but not till then. O did they consider how little flattery doth secure them, and how little the Judge of all the world regards their worldly pomp and splendour; yea, how greatly their greatness doth aggravate their sin and misery, they would frown their flatterers out of doors, and call for plain and faithful dealers. Of all the miseries of worldly greatness, this is not the least, that usually such want the necessary blessing of a glass that will truly show them their faces; of a friend at hand that will deal plainly and justly with their souls. Who tells them plainly of the odiousness, and bitter fruits of sin; and of the wrath of God, and endless misery? How few such true and faithful friends have they! and what wonder, when it is a carnal inducement that draweth men to follow them. It is their wealth and honour, and their power to do men good or hurt in outward things, that makes their friends. They are attended by these flies and wasps, because they carry the honey-pot which they love. And God saith to his followers, "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And it is for love of worldly things, even the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and pride of life, &c. which are not of the Father, but of the world: it is for these that great men have their friends and fol-

lowers : and, therefore, it is plain, that the worst sort of men are ordinarily their friends ; for those are the worst men, that have not the love of the Father in them, but are the friends of the world, and, therefore, the enemies of God. And the best, though fit to be their truest friends, are seldom their followers, as knowing that the attractive of the sensual world is a shadow, unfit to deceive those that are acquainted with its vanity, and a snare, unfit to take those that have observed how Satan lays and baits the trap, and how they have fared that have been taken in it. A despised Christ, that hath the words of eternal life, is much more followed by men that have the heavenly relish. Such gracious souls, whose appetites are not corrupted by the creature, have more mind to flock after a spiritual and powerful messenger of Christ, that talks to them of his kingdom, and the righteousness thereof, which they first seek, than to gape after the preferment and vain-glory of prosperity. Christ, that despised the offer of all the kingdoms and glory of the world, doth teach his followers to despise them.

Seeing, then, the ordinary attendants of the prosperous are the worst of men, that seek themselves, and are purveying for the flesh, what wonder if they be flatterers, that have neither skill, nor will, to speak that displeasing language of reproof, that should make the prosperous know themselves ! O how seldom (or never) do they hear, what the poor can hear from every mouth ! If a man of low degree be wicked, or offend, his enemy dare tell him of it, and his friend dare tell him of it, and his angry neighbour, or companion, will be sure to tell him of

it; and they dare tell him frequently till he amend, and tell him plainly. But if great ones be as bad, and need more help, as having more temptation, yet, alas! they may sin, and sin again, and perish, for any body that will deal faithfully with their souls, except some faithful minister of Christ, whose plainness is taken but for a thing of course. And usually, even ministers themselves are some of them so unfaithful, and some so fearful, and some so prudently cautious, that such persons have no such help from them to know themselves, as the poorer sort of people have. If we deal freely with them, if it offend, yet offence may be easily borne, as bringing no ill consequents to our ministry; but if we deal so with the great ones of the world, what outcries would it raise, and by what names should we and our preaching be called! Though yet I doubt not but it is borne and loved by those that have true grace; and that if David sin, he can endure to hear from Nathan, "Thou art the man." And an Eli can bear the prophecy of Samuel, and say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." And a Hezekiah can say, "Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken;" and Josiah can bear the threatenings of Huldah. And it is a double honour in persons that have so great temptations, to love the plain discoveries of their sin; but a Joash will slay even Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, that set him up; and a Herod, that hath so much religion as to fear John, as knowing that he was a just man, and a holy, and to observe (or save him); and when he heard him, to do many things, and hear him gladly, had yet so much love

to his fleshly lust, and so little power to resist a flatterer, as that he could sell both the head of John and his own soul, for so pitiful a price as this. So true is that saying of Christ himself, “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprovèd (or discovered). But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”

And, indeed, there is none that more opposeth Micaiah than Zedekiah, as being concerned for the honour of his flattering prophecy, to bring plain dealing into disgrace. It is he that smiteth him, and saith, “Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me, to speak unto thee?” But saith Solomon, “He that rebuketh a man, afterward shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.” And, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”

When prosperity is vanished, the flatterer and the faithful dealer will be better known. None of them will admire or applaud you when you are low, and the tide is gone, and hath left you in contempt: these kind of men will be as ready as any to reproach you; as Shemei that honoured David in his prosperity, but curseth him, and revileth him as a rebel against Saul, and casteth stones at him, when he saw him flying in distress. Commonly men in misery, or at death, have better thoughts of faithful plainness, and worse of smoothing man-pleasers, than before.

But whom can the prosperous blame so much as themselves, if they are undone by the deceit of flat-

terers? It is their own choice; they love to have it so; they will not endure faithful dealing. When they contract those diseases which will not be cured without bitter medicines, they hate the physician that offereth them; their appetites and sensual lust, and not their believing-reason, doth choose their work, their pleasures, and their company, and prescribe what language must be spoken to them. And he that resolves to cast away the remedy, and will please his appetite and fancy, come of it what will, must take what he gets by it, and bear the endless wrath of God, that could not bear the necessary warnings and self-knowledge that should have prevented it. Did these men hate sin, and the messengers of Satan, they would not hate the justice and messengers of God; but while they damnably love fleshly pleasures, they cannot savingly love the word that chargeth them to let go those pleasures, nor the persons that cross them in the things they love. And thus, poor worldlings are ruined by their own desires; it seemeth so sweet to them to live in sin, that they cannot endure to know the bitter fruits of misery, which it will at last bring forth. They are conquered by their fleshly lusts, and, therefore, they hate the messengers of that Spirit which would fight against them. Satan doth perfect his former victories in them, by dispelling, or dispersing, the auxiliaries of Christ, that were sent for their rescue and relief. They live as if they were purposely made great, that they may be able to drive away the messengers of salvation, and to keep the voice of mercy far enough from their ears; and to command that which the Gadarenes did en-

treat, that Christ would go out of their coasts, because they would not be troubled with him. They so much love the way to hell, that they cannot abide to be told whither it leadeth them, and, therefore, they come thither before they are aware, and must know themselves by the unquenchable fire, because they would not know themselves by the discovering recovering light. And thus, by prosperity and flattery, Satan pursues and wins his game.

Direct. 2. In opposition to this hinderance, two things are to be done. 1. Desire not so perilous a station as worldly prosperity and greatness is. Love not, and seek not, a condition so hazardous to your souls. Leave that to them that take it for their portion, as not, believing what they must lose and suffer by it; or what God hath revealed of the life to come.

Or if you be in such prosperity, not by your desire, but by the will and providence of God, let your fear and watchfulness be doubled, as your dangers are; be not like those sensualists, that “feed themselves without fear.” Use not prosperity to the pleasing of the flesh, and the prospering of your lusts, but deny yourselves in the midst of your abundance; and turn it into an adversity to your sensual inclinations, by taming the body, and bringing it into subjection, and suspecting yourselves, and walking humbly with God and man.

And when adversity is upon you, improve the opportunity for the knowledge of yourselves. Then take a just survey of your former course of life. Then try your ways, when the drunkenness and deceits of prosperity are past, and the hand of God

hath brought you into a sober and considerate state. O how many souls do know that in one day, when adversity hath made them wise and sensible, which before they knew, and would not know; they saw it, but did not understand and feel it! Then, on a sudden, they are able to pass a right judgment, upon their yielding to temptations, and the value of the things that tempted them, and upon their worldly designs, and fleshly wisdom, and their neglects of God, and heaven, and duty, than before they could do, though they had ever so much instruction. Affliction taketh away the deceiving advantages of fleshly objects, and unmasketh the glory and profit of the world, and awakneth the rational faculties to perform their office, and, therefore, is an excellent opportunity for self-acquaintance. The prodigal came to himself, when he was denied to fill his belly with the food of swine. Nature teacheth men to understand that it is the principal lesson that affliction readeth to us, to know ourselves, and our ways, as they are related to God and to his judgment.

2. If you are in prosperity, be the more suspicious of flatterers, and drive them away with the greater detestation. And be the more solicitous to procure such faithful overseers and physicians for your souls, as will do their best to save you, though they displease you. O that you knew what an advantage it is to have a faithful pastor, and a faithful friend, that seek not yours but you, and make no advantage to themselves by flattering you, but choose the means that tend most to your salvation! And O that you knew the great disadvantage of those that want such a pastor, and such a friend! You would then

be sure to give it as your strictest charge to both, to deal plainly with you, and never to hide or extenuate your sin or danger. You would charge your teachers, ‘Whatever you do, deal faithfully with my soul! If you see me in any dangerous course, I beseech you tell me of it; if I should be hardened against your warnings and reproofs, I beseech you deal not lightly with me, but labour to awaken me, and set it home, and pull me out of the fire, and save me as with fear. O suffer me not to be quiet in my sins.’ The like charge, also, you would give to your friends that are about you, and converse with you; choose such pastors, and such friends, as are fittest, to prove your friends indeed; and charge and entreat them, as they love your souls, and as they will answer it before God, that they suffer you not to sin for fear of displeasing you by plain reproofs; and resolve to submit and take it well. A stander-by hath the great advantage of impartiality, and, therefore, may see that in you what you observe not in yourselves: self-love doth not hinder us so much in judging of other men’s cases as our own. Friendly and faithful dealing, in the matters of eternal consequence, is the principal use and benefit of friendship. This differenceth the communion of saints from Beelzebub’s swarm of flies and caterpillars. Thus, “two are better than one: for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up.” Much more woe to him, that hath a multitude to cast him and to keep him down.

† *Hind.* 3. The third extrinsical impediment to

self-knowledge, is conversing only with such as are as bad as ourselves; and not with such whose lives display the spiritual endowment, and excellencies which we want. Though Christians that know better the common disease, do know that there must be a common humiliation and remedy, yet these indeed are the thoughts of most; they know not that it is a matter of dishonour and lamentation, to be no better than the most, and to lie in the common corruptions of the world, and to have no better hearts than they had by nature. To hear preachers talk of holiness, and a Divine nature, and a new birth, and of being made new creatures, and of living in the love of God, and in the joyful hopes of endless glory, doth seem to them but as the talk of a world in the sun, or the description of an angel, which humbleth not them at all, for not being such, nor exciteth in them any great desires to be such: as long as they see not the persons that are such, they think these are but devout imaginations, or the pious dreams of melancholy men; and that indeed there are no such persons in the world. They judge of all the world, or almost all, by those about them; and they think that God should be unmerciful if he should condemn so great a number as they see are like themselves; and should save none but those few transcendent souls that they describe, but are unacquainted with.

It sometimes melteth my heart, in pity of many great ones of the world, to think how hard a matter it is for them to know indeed what holiness is; when they seldom hear so much as one heavenly prayer or discourse, or any serious talk of the matters of

sanctification, and communion with Christ. When profaneness and wickedness dwell about them, and make such as are but civil and temperate, and good-natured persons, to seem saints: when they see but few that fear the Lord, and love him unfeignedly, and live by faith: and those few are perhaps of the more cold, and timorous, and temporizing strain, that show forth but little of the heavenly nature, and the virtues of their holy faith; that dare scarce open their mouths to speak against the wickedness which they see or hear; that dare not discourse like the saints of the Most High, and the heirs of heaven, for fear of being made the scorn and by-word of the rest, or of falling under the frowns and dislike of their superiors; so that they live among others almost like common men, save only that they run not with them to their excess of riot; and think it enough that by such forbearance of gross sin, they are in some measure evil spoken of: when they that should “let their light so shine before men, that they might see their good works, and glorify their heavenly Father, do hide their religion, and put their light as under a bushel, and not in a candlestick, that it might give light to all that are in the house;” and so, when religion never appeareth in its proper splendour and power, and heavenly tendency, to those great ones that have no better company, what wonder if they never know themselves, nor truly understand the nature, necessity, or excellency of religion? When they know it, for the most part, but by hearsay, yea, and when they hear it more reproached than applauded, it must be a miracle of mercy that must make such men to be sincerely and heartily

religious. When they see so many about them worse than themselves, and so few better, and those few that are better do hide it, and live almost as if they were no better; and when the godly, whom they see not, are described to them by the serpent's seed, as if they were but a company of whining, melancholy, brain-sick hypocrites, who can expect that ever such men should savingly know themselves or Christ, unless a wonder of mercy rescue them, and bring them from this darkness and delusion into the light? O how oft have I wished in compassion to many of the great ones of the world, that they did but hear the humble, holy, heavenly language, that we have heard! And hear the faithful fervent prayers that many poor Christians pour out before the Lord! and saw but the humble, harmless, exemplary, and heavenly lives of many poor Christians, that are represented to them as the filth and the offscouring of the world, and perhaps no more regarded than Lazarus was at the rich man's gate. Did they but see and hear, and know such holy and heavenly believers, and were as well acquainted with them as we are, how many of them would better know themselves, and see what they want, and what they must be, and better discern between the righteous and the wicked, between those that fear God, and those that fear him not?

Direct. 3. It will, therefore, be a great help to the knowledge of yourselves, if you will converse with those that bear the holy image of their Creator, and whose lives will tell you what it is to live by faith, and what it is to walk in the Spirit, to mortify the flesh, and to live above all the alluring vanities

of the world. We can more sensibly perceive the nature of holiness, when we see it in action before our eyes, than when we only read a description of it. Many thousands can honour the name of a saint, and the Scripture descriptions of a saint, that hate the life of holiness, when it appeareth to them in practice, and cannot endure a saint indeed. It will most convincingly tell you what you want, when you see what others have. To see how naturally they breathe after heaven, will most convincingly show you the dulness and earthliness of your minds: to see how easily they can love an enemy, and forgive a wrong, will acquaint you most sensibly with the evils of your passionate, revengeful minds. Do but lay by your prejudice and partiality, and see whether there be not in serious Christians another spirit than in the world: and whether they live not upon the things above, which your belief and love did never reach? Look upon believers, and consider why they pray, and watch, and study to please God, and then bethink yourselves, whether you have not as much cause to do so as they: and so you may perceive your negligence by their diligence; your senselessness by their tenderness of heart and conscience; your fleshliness by their spirituality; and the rest of your sins by the lustre of their graces. As Isidore saith, "Men know not themselves by themselves alone."

Hence, therefore, the servants of God may see how exactly they should live, and of what consequence it is that they be eminently holy; when it is they that, by their heavenly excellency, must convince the world of their sinfulness and misery. O Chris-

tians, do you live such exemplary and convincing lives? Is there indeed that excellency of holiness appearing in you, which may show men, to the glory of your Redeemer, how the heirs of heaven do differ from the world? Alas! our common, careless living, doth wrong to multitudes as well as to ourselves; and is a cruelty to the souls whose salvation we are bound, by our examples, to promote. What then do those men, that by their vicious, scandalous conversation, do harden the ungodly, and cause them to think contemptuously, and to speak scornfully, of the holy way! O woe to them, if they repent not, by whom such offence cometh!

Especially, ministers should see that their lives be a continual lecture. And, therefore, Chrysostom concludeth, "That a priest that is bad, doth acquire, by his priesthood, not dignity but disgrace. For (saith he) thou sittest in judgment on thyself: if thou live well and preach well, thou instructest the people: if thou preach well and live ill, thou condemnest thyself. For by living well and preaching well, thou instructest the people how to live: but by preaching well and living ill, thou instructest God, as it were, how to condemn thee."

And hence it is, also, that the servants of God should have the care of their fame, as well as of their conversation; because the reputation of religion dependeth much on the reputation of the religious: and reputation doth much to the encouraging or discouraging of the ungodly that are strangers to the things themselves. Saith Augustine, "Conscience is necessary for thyself: and thy good name is necessary for thy neighbour." When we mind our fame for the

good of others, and the service of God, and not to please a proud, vainglorious mind; and when we do it, without immoderate care, seeking it only by righteous means, and referring the issue to the will of God, as being prepared for evil report as well as good, this is but to improve our talent to our Master's use.



CHAPTER XI.

Internal Hinderances of Self-Acquaintance.

II. I come next to the internal impediments to self-acquaintance, especially in the worser sort of men.

1. The first that I shall acquaint you with is, That natural, deep-rooted sin of pride, which strongly inclineth men to think well of themselves, and to desire that all others do so too: so that, where pride is not discovered and subdued by grace, men will scarcely endure to be closely questioned by ministers or other friends, about their sin, and the condition of their souls. What! question them whether they are ungodly, unsanctified, the servants of sin and Satan; in a state of death and condemnation! Their hearts will rise with indignation against him that will put such questions to them. What! question them whether they have any saving grace! Whether they are regenerate, pardoned, and have any well-grounded hopes of heaven! They love not the searching word of God; they love not the distinguishing passages of Scripture; they love not a

faithful, searching minister, because they would dishonour and trouble them with such doubts as these. A proud man judgeth not of himself as he is, but as his tumified, distempered fancy representeth him to himself to be: to "think himself something when he is nothing," and so to be wilfully his own deceiver, is his disease. And as pride is one of the deepest-rooted sins in man, and of greatest strength, and most hardly extirpated and overcome, so true self-acquaintance must be accordingly difficult, it being carried on but by such degrees as we get ground and victory against our pride. A proud man, how wise soever in any other matters, as to the right knowledge of himself, is like one that is crack-brained, and hath not indeed the right use of reason: pride was his first tutor, and taught him what to believe of himself: so that Christ, who comes after with a humbling doctrine, cannot be believed, nor scarcely with any patience heard. O what a disease is to be cured, before a proud person will well know himself! What labour do we lose in all our sermons! Yea, how oft doth the medicine irritate the disease! So that a poor wretch, that is under the wrath of God, and knoweth not, when he is gone out of the assembly, whether the justice of Heaven will not take vengeance on him before he can come hither again, yet cannot abide to hear of this, but, with Ahab, hateth the preacher that prophesieth evil of him, be it ever so true. It is pride that leadeth up that army of corruptions, that here strive against the light of truth, that is sent to convince and convert the guilty. And is a man like to be saved by the word, while

he hateth it, and bends his thoughts and passions all against it?

Direct. 1. He, therefore, that will ever know himself, must first let in so much of the light as may take down his arrogance, and bring him, as a little child, to the school of Christ. First know what thou art as a man; and then know what thou art as a sinner, and sentenced by God, that so thou mayest come to know what thou art as one that is under the hopes and duties of the redeemed. When thy proud heart rebelleth against conviction, remember with whom thou hast to do. Will God speak submissively to thee for fear of offending thee? Will he cry thee mercy for handling thee so roughly as to tell thee thou art yet the child of wrath? Is he afraid to talk to thee of death or of damnation? Will he recal his threatenings, and repent him of the severity of his laws, because such worms are angry with them, or will not believe them? Perhaps thou mayest make a false-hearted, fearful, man-pleasing minister, to change his strain or plainer dealing, and become thy flatterer, or be silent: but will God be silenced? O no; he will one day tell thee what thou art with another voice than this of a mortal and despised man, and in another manner than preachers tell it thee. If thou canst frown the preacher out of the pulpit, or out of his fidelity to God and thee, yet canst thou not frown God out of heaven. He will speak to thee more terribly than the most terrible preacher that ever thou heardst: and if thy pride shall rise up, and tell him that he doth thee wrong, how quickly will thy “mouth be stopped,” and thou be forced to confess thy guilt! O

stoop to the humbling word of grace, or God will make thee stoop to the words and strokes of wrath ! Fear Him that will make the proudest fear, before he hath done with them. Judged thou must be ; by thyself, to self-abasing and conversion, or by God to desolation and confusion : and canst thou easier bear God's judgment than thy own ! Stoop, foolish, self-deluding dust ! Stoop, sinful wretch, and know thy misery ! If thou stand it out a little longer, an undiscerned blow may bring thee down ; and thou shalt not see the hand that strikes thee, till thou art humbled in the grave and hell. O how absurd, yet pitiful a sight is it, to see poor sinners brave it out against the humbling message of the Lord, as if they could make good their cause against him ! And scorn to know that they are going to hell, till they are there ! And then will pride preserve them from the knowledge of it ? It is shameful folly to be proud and obstinate, where a man knoweth beforehand that he must submit at last, and is not able to stand it out.

2. The second intrinsical impediment to self-acquaintance, is an unreasonable tenderness of ourselves ; when an inordinate love of ease and quietness of mind doth prevail with us to hold fast all that thus quieteth us at the present, without regard of due provision for the time to come ; in this there is a mixture of unreasonableness and self-love : it is indeed the very brutish disposition. A beast will have at present what he loveth, though you feed him for the slaughter ! for he hath not reason to foresee what followeth. Fleshly-minded men have thus brutified themselves, so that they judge of things by present

feeling, and have not reason and faith to look before them, and judge of things by the good or hurt that will follow in the end. It is a very terrible troublesome thing, for a man that is unregenerate, unjustified, and unreconciled to God, to know it; for a man that hath any feeling left, to find himself in a state of condemnation: this is to stir up all the terrors of his soul, and cast him into perplexing fears and disquietments of mind; so that he cannot eat or drink, or sleep in quietness, but the troublesome thoughts of sin and everlasting wrath torment him; and the inconsiderate man, that judgeth of things by present feeling, will not endure this. As most men hate those that speak against them, be the matter ever so true, so they cannot endure those thoughts that do accuse them, nor to have a reprovcr so near them, even in their own breasts; a conscience within them, to preach to them night and day: not one hour in a week, but wherever they go, and whatever they are doing; to be so near, so constant, so precise, and so severe and terrible a preacher, as usually a newly enlightened and awakened conscience is: this seemeth intolerable to them; and whatever come of it, this preacher must be silenced, as turbulent and vexatious, and one that would make them melancholy or mad. “And this is the condemnation (of these miserable souls), that light is come into the world, and they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil: for every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprovcd.” And thus, while men are so tender of themselves, that they will do nothing that troubleth or hurteth them

at the present, they venture upon all the miseries that they are forewarned of.

Direct. 2. Be not unreasonably tender of a little disturbance at the present, nor unbelievably careless of the misery to come. Cannot you endure to know your sin and misery, and yet can you endure to bear it? Will you go to hell, for fear of knowing that you are in the way? Must you not know it with everlasting woe and vengeance when you come thither, if, by knowing your danger, you prevent not your coming thither? Is it easier to bear God's wrath for ever, than to find at present that you have offended him? Sirs, the question is, Whether you are under the condemnation of the law, or not? Whether you are regenerate and justified, or yet in your sin? If you are justified, far be it from me to persuade you to think that you are under condemnation: I leave that to Satan and the malicious world, who are the condemners of those that Christ doth justify. But if you are unregenerate and unjustified, what will you do at death and judgment? Can you stand before God, or be saved upon any other terms? You cannot; if God be to be believed, you cannot: and, if you know the Scriptures, you know you cannot. And if you cannot be saved in an unrenewed, unjustified state, is it not needful that you know it? Will you cry for help before you find yourselves in danger? or strive to get out of sin and misery, before you believe that you are in it? If you think that you have no other sin than the pardoned infirmities of the godly, you will never so value Jesus Christ, and pray and strive for such grace as is necessary to them that have the unpar-

doned, reigning sins of the ungodly. If it be necessary that you be saved, it is necessary that you value and seek salvation; and, if so, it is necessary that you know your need of it, and what you must be and do, if you will obtain it. If you can prove, that ever any was converted and saved, by any other way, than by the coming to the knowledge of their sin and misery, then you have some excuse for your presumption: but if Scripture tell us of no other way; yea, that there is no other way, and you know of none that ever was saved by any other, I think it is time to fall to work, and search and try your hearts and lives. You should rather think with yourselves, If we can so hardly bear the forethoughts of hell, how shall we be able, everlastingly, to bear the torments?

And consider, that Christ hath made the discovery of your sin and misery to be now comparatively an easy burden, in that he hath made them pardonable and curable. If you had not had a Saviour to fly to, but must have looked on your misery as a remediless case, it had then been terrible indeed; and it had been no great mistake to have thought it the best way to take a little ease at present, rather than to disquiet yourselves in vain. But, through the great mercy of God, this is not your case; you need not despair of pardon and salvation, if you will but hear while it is called To-day. The task that you are called to, is only to find out your disease, and come and open it to the physician, submit to his advice, use his means, and he will freely and infallibly work the cure. It is but to find out the folly that you have been guilty of, and the dan-

ger that you have brought yourselves into, and come to Christ, and, with hearty sorrow and resolution, to give up yourselves to his grace, to cast away your iniquities, and enter into his safe and comfortable service. And will you lie in hell and say, ‘ We are suffering here, that we might escape the trouble of foreseeing our danger of it, or of endeavouring in time to have prevented it !’ O sirs, be warned in time, and own not, and practise not, such egregious folly, in a business of everlasting consequence. Believe it, if you sin, you must know that you have sinned : and if you are in the power of Satan it cannot long be hid. Did you but know the difference between discovering it now while there is hope, and hereafter when there is none, I should have no need to persuade you to be willing to know the truth, whatever it should cost you.

Hind. 3. Another great impediment of the knowledge of ourselves, is, that self-love so blindeth men that they can see no great evil in themselves, or any thing that is their own. It makes them believe that all things are as they would have them be ; yea, and better than they would have them : for he that would not indeed be holy, is willing by himself and others to be thought so : did not the lamentable experience of all the world confirm it, it were incredible that self-love could so exceedingly blind men. If charity think no evil of another, much more will self-love cause men to see no evil by themselves. No argument so cogent, no light so clear, no oratory so persuading, as can make a self-lover think himself as bad as indeed he is, till God, by grace or terror, shall convince him. When you are preaching the most

searching sermons to convince him, self-love confuteth or misapplieth them ; when the marks of trial are most plainly opened, and most closely urged, self-love doth frustrate the preacher's greatest skill and diligence. When nothing of sense can be said to prove the piety of the impious, and the sincerity of the formal hypocrite, yet self-love is that wonderful alchymist, that can make gold not only of the basest metal, but of dross and dirt. No cause so bad which it cannot justify : and no person so miserable but it will pronounce him happy, till God, by grace or wrath, confute it. Self-love is the grand deceiver of the world.

Direct. 3. Subdue this inordinate self-love, and bring your minds to a just impartiality in judging. Remember that self-love is only powerful at your private bar ; and it is not there that your cause must be finally decided : it can do nothing at the bar of God ; it cannot there justify, where it is condemned itself : God will not so much as hear it, though you will hear none that speak against it. Self-love is but the vicegerent of the grand usurper, that shall be deposed, and have no show of power, at Christ's appearing, when he will judge his enemies.

And if you would have the benefits of friendship, discourage not plain dealing. " I know a reprover should be wise, and love must be predominant if he will expect success ;" but we must take heed of judging that we are hated, because we are reprovèd ; that is, that a friend is not a friend, because he doth the office of a friend. Of the two, it is fitter to say of a reprovèing enemy, ' He dealeth with me like a friend,' than of a reprovèing friend, ' He dealeth with

me like an enemy.' It is a happy enmity that helpeth you to deliver you from sin and hell; and a cruel friendship that will let you undo your soul for ever, for fear of displeasing you by hindering it.

There are two sorts that deprive themselves of the saving benefit of necessary reproof, and the most desirable fruits of friendship: the one is the Hypocrite, that so cunningly hideth his greatest faults, that his friend and enemy never tell him of them: he hath the happiness of keeping his physician unacquainted with his disease, and, consequently, of keeping the disease. The other is the Proud, that can better endure to be ungodly than to be told of it, and to live in many sins, than to be freely admonished of one.

Consider, therefore, that it will prove self-hatred in the effect, which is now called self-love: and that it would seem but a strange kind of love from another, to suffer you to fall into a coal-pit, for fear of telling you that you are near it. If you love another no better than thus, you have no reason to call yourself his friend: and shall this be your wisest loving of yourselves? If it be love to damn your souls for fear of knowing your danger of damnation, the devil loveth you. If it be friendship to keep you out of heaven, for fear of disquieting you with the light that should have saved you, then you have no enemies in hell. The devil himself can be content to grant you a temporal quietness and ease, in order to your everlasting woe. Let go your hopes of heaven, and he can let you be merry a while on earth; while the strong armed man keepeth his house, the things that he possesseth are in peace. If it be not friend-

ship, but enmity, to trouble you with the sight of sin and danger, in order to your deliverance, then you have none but enemies in heaven: for God himself doth take this course with the dearest of his chosen. No star doth give such light as the sun doth: no minister doth so much to make a sinner know himself, as God doth. Love yourselves, therefore, in the way that God loveth you: be impartially willing that God and man should help you to be thoroughly acquainted with your state: love not to be flattered by others, or yourselves. Vice is never the more lovely, because it is yours: and you know that pain is never the more easy or desirable to you, because it is yours. Your own diseases, losses, injuries, and miseries, seem the worst and most grievous to you: and why should not your own sins also be most grievous? You love not poverty or pain, because it is your own; O love not sin, because it is your own!

Hind. 4. Another impediment to self-acquaintance, is, that men observe not their hearts in a time of trial, but take them always at the best, when no great temptation puts them to it. A man that never had an opportunity to rise in the world, perhaps doth think he is not ambitious, and desireth not much to be higher than he is, because the coal was never blown. When a little affront doth ferment their pride into disquietness and desires of revenge; or applause doth ferment it into self-exaltation, they observe not then the distemper when it is up and most observable, because the nature of sin is to please and blind, and cheat the mind into a consent. And when the sin seems past, and they find them-

selves in a seeming humility and meekness, they judge of themselves as then they find themselves, as thinking that distemper is past and cured, and they are not to judge of themselves by what they were, but what they are. And, by that rule, every drunkard or whoremonger should judge themselves temperate and chaste, as soon as they forbear the act of sin. And what if poverty, age, or sickness, hinder them from ever committing either of them again? For all this, the person is a drunkard or fornicator still; because the act is not pardoned, nor the heart sanctified, and the habit or corrupt inclination mortified. And thus passionate persons do judge of themselves by their milder temper, when no temptation kindleth the flame. But little doth many a one know what corruption is latent in his heart, till trial shall disclose it, and draw it into sight. “If these persons be not always sinning, they will not take themselves for sinners: but he that hath once sinned knowingly, in God’s account continueth in the sin, till his heart be changed by true repentance.”—*Augustine*.

Yet, on the other hand, I would not wrong any upright soul, by persuading them to judge of themselves as they are at the worst, in the hour of temptation; for so they will be mistaken as certainly, though not as dangerously, as the other.

You may ask then, ‘What is to be done in such a difficult case? If we must neither judge of ourselves as we are at the best, out of temptation, nor yet as we are at the worst, in the hour of temptation, when and how then shall we judge of ourselves?’

I answer, it is one thing to know our particular

sins, and their degrees, and another thing to know our state in general, whether we are justified and sanctified, or not. To discern what particular sin is in us, and how apt it is to break forth into act, we must watch all the stirrings and appearings of it, in the time of the temptation: but to discern whether it be unmortified and have dominion, we must observe these rules:

1. There is no man on earth that is perfectly free from sin; and, therefore, it is no good consequence that sin reigneth unto death, because it is not perfectly extinguished, or because it is sometimes committed, unless in the cases after expressed.

2. No sin that is truly mortified and repented of, shall condemn the sinner: for pardon is promised to the truly penitent.

3. Whatever sin the will, according to its habitual inclination, had rather leave than keep, is truly repented of and mortified. For the will is the principal seat of sin; and there is no more sinfulness, than there is wilfulness.

4. There are some sins which cannot be frequently committed in consistency with true grace, or sincere repentance; and some which may be frequently committed in consistency with these. As where sins are known and great, or such as are easily subject to the power of a sanctified will, so that he that will reject them, may, as one such sin must have actual repentance, if actually known; so the frequent committing of such will not consist with habitual repentance. Whereas those sins, that are so small as upright persons, perhaps, may not be sufficiently excited to resistance; or such as, upon the sincere use

of means, are still unknown, or such as a truly sanctified will may not subdue, are all of them consistent with repentance and a justified state: and in this sense we reject not that distinction between moral and venial sin; that is, between sin inconsistent with a state of spiritual life, and sin consistent with it, and consequently pardoned. He that had rather leave the former sort, (the mortal sins,) will leave them; and he that truly repents of them, will forsake them. But for the other (consistent with life) we must say, that a man may possibly retain them, that yet had rather leave them, and doth truly repent of them.

5. A sin of carnal interest (esteemed good, in order to something which the flesh desireth; and so loved and deliberately kept) hath more of the will, and is more inconsistent with repentance, than a sin of mere passion or surprise, which is not so valued upon the account of such an interest.

6. They that have grace enough to avoid temptations to mortal or reigning sin, and consequently that way to avoid the sin, shall not be condemned for it, whatever a stronger temptation might have done.

7. Where bodily diseases necessitate to an act, or the omission of an act, the will is not to be charged with that which it cannot overcome, notwithstanding an unfigned willingness. As if a man in a frenzy or distraction should swear or curse, or blaspheme; or one in a lethargy, or potent melancholy, cannot read, or pray, or meditate, &c.

8. As frequent commissions of venial sins (or such as are consistent with true grace) will not prove the soul unsanctified; so the once committing of a gross

sin by surprise, which is afterward truly repented of, will not prove the absence of habitual repentance, or spiritual life, so as the frequent committing of such sins will.

So that I conclude, in order to the detection of the sin itself, we must all take notice of ourselves as at the worst, and see what it is that temptation can do: but in order to the discovery of our state, and whether our sins are pardoned or not, we must especially observe whether their eruptions are such as will consist with true habitual repentance, and to note what temptations do with us. To this end,

Direct. 4. Observe then the workings and discoveries of the heart, and judge of its abundance, or habits, by your words and deeds. Note what you were when you had opportunity to sin, when the full cup of pleasure was held out to you, when preferment was before you, when injury or provoking words did blow the coal: if then sin appeared, judge not that you are free, and that none of the roots are latent in your hearts: or if you are sure that such dispositions are hated, repented of, and mortified, yet you may hence observe what diseases of soul you should chiefly strive against, to keep them under, and prevent a new surprise or increase. It is usual for such licentiousness, such self-seeking, such ugly pride and passion, to break forth upon some special temptations, which for many years together did never appear to the person that is guilty, or to any other, that it should keep the best in fear and self-suspicion, and cause them to live in constant watchfulness, and to observe the bent and motions of their souls: and to make use afterward of such discoveries as they have made to their cost in time of trial.

And it much concerneth all true Christians, to keep in remembrance the exercise and discoveries of grace, which formerly, upon trial, did undoubtedly appear, and did convince them of the sincerity which afterward they are apt again to question. Will you not believe that there is a sun in the firmament, unless it always shine upon you? It is weakness and injurious rashness in those Christians, that, upon every damp that seizeth on their spirits, will venture to deny God's former mercies, and say, that they had never special grace, because they feel it not at present; that they never prayed in sincerity, because some distemper at present discomposeth or overwhelmeth them; that their former zeal and life was counterfeit, because they are grown more cold and dull; that former comforts were all but hypocritical delusions, because they are turned now to sorrows: as much as to say, 'Because I am now sick, I was never well.' O, were it not for the tender compassions of our Father, and the sure performance of our Lord and Comforter, and that our peace is more in his hand than our own, (though more in our own than any others,) it could never be that a poor, distempered, imperfect soul, should here have any constancy of peace, considering the power of self-love and partiality on one side, and of grief, and fear, and other passions, on the other; and how little a thing doth shake so moveable and weak a thing, and muddy and trouble a mind so easily disturbed; and how hard it is again to quiet and compose a mind so troubled, and bring a grieved soul to reason, and make passion understand the truth, and to cause a weak afflicted soul to judge clean contrary

to what they feel ! All this considered, no wonder if the peace and comfort of many Christians be yet but little, and interrupted, and uneven. To show us the sun at midnight, and convince us of love while we feel the rod; and to give us the comfortable sense of grace, while we have the uncomfortable sense of the greatness of our sin; to give us the joyful hopes of glory, in a troubled, melancholy, dejected state: all this is a work that requireth the special help of the Almighty, and exceeds the strength of feeble worms. Let God give us ever so full discoveries of his tenderest love, and our own sincerity, as if a voice from heaven had witnessed it to us, we are questioning all if once we seem to *feel* the contrary, and are perplexed in the tumult of our thoughts and passions, and bewildered and lost in the errors of our own disturbed minds. Though we have walked with God, we are questioning whether indeed we ever knew him, as soon as he seemeth to hide his face. Though we have felt another life and spirit possess and actuate us than heretofore, and found that we love the things and persons which once we loved not, and that we were quite fallen out with that which was our former pleasure, and that our souls broke off from their old delights, and hopes, and ways, and resolvedly did engage themselves to God, and unfeignedly delivered up themselves unto him; yet all is forgotten, or the convincing evidence of all forgotten, if the lively influences of heaven be but once so far withdrawn, as that our present state is clouded and afflicted, and our former vigour and assurance is abated. And thus unthankfully we deny God the praise and acknowledgment of his mercies,

longer than we are tasting them, or they are still before us: all that he hath done for us is as nothing, and all the love which he hath manifested to us, is called hatred; and all the witnesses that have put their hands to his acts of grace, are questioned, and his very seals denied, and his earnest misinterpreted, as long as our darkened, distempered souls, are in a condition unfit for the apprehension of mercy, and usually when a diseased or afflicted body doth draw the mind into too great a participation of the affliction. And thus, as we are disposed ourselves, so we judge of ourselves and of all our receivings, and all God's dealings with us. When we feel ourselves well, all goes well with us, and we put a good interpretation upon all things; and when we are out of order, we complain of every thing, and take pleasure in nothing. And thus, while the discoveries, both of sin and grace, are at present overlooked, or afterwards forgotten, and almost all men judge of themselves by present feeling, no wonder if few are well acquainted with themselves.

But as the word and the works of God must be taken together, if they be understood, and not a sentence, part, or parcel, taken separated from the rest, which must make up the sense; so also the workings of God upon your souls must be taken altogether, and you must read them over from the first till now, and set altogether, and not forget the part that went before, or else you will make no sense of that which followeth. And I beseech all weak and troubled Christians to remember, also, that they are but children and scholars in the school of Christ; and therefore, when they cannot set the several

parts together, let them not overvalue their inexperienced understandings, but, by the help of their skilful, faithful teachers, do that which of themselves they cannot do. Inquire what your former mercies signify : open them to your guides, and tell them how God hath dealt with you from the beginning, and tell them how it is with you now ; and desire them to help you to perceive how one conduceth to the right understanding of the other. And be not of froward, but of tractable, submissive minds : and thus your self-acquaintance may be maintained, at least to safety, and to some degree of peace, if not to the joys which you desire, which God reserveth for their proper season.

I should have added more on this necessary subject, but that I have said so much of it in other writings, especially in the “ Saints’ Rest,” part iii. chap. 7. and in my “ Treatise of Self-denial,” and in “ The Right Method for Peace of Conscience.”

I must confess I have written on this subject as I did of Self-denial, namely, with expectation that all men should confess the truth of what I say ; and yet so few be cured by it of their self-ignorance, as that still we must stand by, and see the world distracted by it, the church divided, the love of brethren interrupted, and the work of Satan carried on by error, violence, and pride ; and the hearts of men so strangely stupified, as to go on incorrigibly in all this mischief, while the cause and cure are opened before them, and all in vain, while they confess the truth ; so that they will leave us nothing to do, but exercise our compassion, by lamenting the delirium of frenetic men, while we are unable to serve the

church, their brethren, or their own souls, from the lacerations and calamitous effects of their furious self-ignorance. But Christ that hath sent us with the light which may be resisted, and abused, and in part blown out, will speedily come with light irresistible, and will teach the proud, the scornful, the unmerciful, the self-conceited, the malicious, and the violent, so effectually to know themselves, as that no more exhortations shall be necessary for the reception of his convictions; nor will he or his servants any more beseech men to consider and know their sin and misery, nor be beholden to them to believe and confess it. (See Jude 14, 15.) And is there no remedy for a stupified, inconsiderate soul? Is there no prevention of so terrible a self-knowledge, as the light of judgment, and the fire of hell, will else procure? Yes, the remedy is certain, easy, and at hand: "Even to know themselves till they are driven to study, and seek, and know the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ;" and yet is the salvation of most as hopeless almost as if there were no remedy, because no persuasion can prevail with them to use it. Lord, what hath thus locked up the minds and hearts of sinners against thy truth and thee! What hath made reasonable man so unreasonable, and a self-loving nature so mortally to hate itself! O thou that openest, and no man shutteth, use the key that openeth hearts; come in with thy wisdom, and thy love, and all this blindness and obstinacy will be gone! At least, commit not the safety of thy flock to such as will not know themselves: but "gather thy remnant, and bring them to their folds, and let them be fruitful and increase; and set up

shepherds over them, which shall feed them, and let them fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor be lacking." " Ordain a place for them, plant them, and let them dwell therein unmoved; and let not the children of wickedness waste them any more." " As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so seek out thy sheep, and deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." " Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance : feed them also, and lift them up for ever."

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